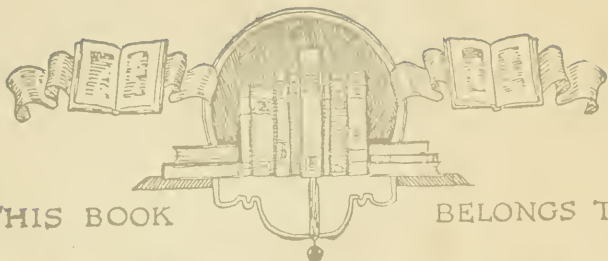


FORT AMITY



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FORT AMITY

ARTHUR
THOMAS
BY A. T. QUILLER-COUCH
"

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1904

TO HENRY NEWBOLT

MY DEAR NEWBOLT,

Two schoolfellows, who had sat together in the Sixth at Clifton, met at Paddington some twenty years later and travelled down to enter their two sons at one school. On their way, while the boys shyly became acquainted, the fathers discussed the project of this story; a small matter in comparison with the real business of that day—but that it happened so gives me the opportunity of dedicating “Fort Amity” to you, its editor in *The Monthly Review*, as a reminder to outlast the short life granted in these days to novels.

Yet if either of our sons shall turn its pages some years hence, though but to remind himself of his first journey to school, I hope he will not lay it down too contemptuously. The tale has, for its own purposes, so seriously confused the geography of Fort Amitié, that he may search the map and end by doubting if any such fortress ever existed and stood a siege: but I trust it will leave him in no doubt of what his elders understood by honour and friendship.

Of these two themes, at any rate, I have composed it, and dedicate it to a poet who has sung nobly of both. “Like to the generations of leaves are those of men”—but while we last, let these deciduous pages commemorate the day when we two went back to school four strong. May they also contain nothing unworthy to survive us in our two fellow-travellers!

A. T. QUILLER-COUCH

THE HAVEN,

April 20th, 1904



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FORT AMITY

CHAPTER I

MALBROUCK S'EN VA T'EN GUERRE

“*SO adieu, Jack, until we meet in Quebec ! You have the start of us, report says, and this may even find you drinking his Majesty’s health in Fort Carillon. Why not ? You carry Howe, and who carries Howe carries the eagles on his standards ; or so you announce in your last. Well, but have we, on our part, no vexillum ? Brother Romulus presents his compliments to Brother Remus, and begs leave to answer ‘ Wolfe ! ’ ’Tis scarce forty-eight hours since Wry-necked Dick brought his ships into harbour with the Brigadier on board, and already I have seen him and—what is more—fallen in love. ‘ What like is he ? ’ says you. ‘ Just a sandy-haired slip of a man,’ says I, ‘ with a cock nose ’ : but I love him, Jack, for he knows his business. We’ve a professional at*

last. No more Pall Mall promenaders—no more Braddocks, Loudons, Webbs! We live in the consulship of Pitt, my lad—deprome Caecubum—we'll tap a cask to it in Quebec. And if Abercromby's your Cæsar——''

Here a bugle sounded, and Ensign John à Cleeve of the 46th Regiment of Foot (Murray's) crushed his friend's letter into his pocket and sprang off the wood-pile where he had seated himself with the regimental colours across his knees. He unfolded them from their staff, assured himself that they hung becomingly—gilt tassels and yellow silken folds—and stepped down to the lake-side where the batteaux waited.

The scene is known to-day for one of the fairest in the world. Populous cities lie near it and pour their holiday-makers upon it through the summer season. Trains whistle along the shore under its forests; pleasure-steamers, with music on their decks, shoot across bays churned of old by the paddles of war-canoes; from wildernesses where Indians lurked in ambush smile neat hotels, white-walled, with green shutters and deep verandahs; and lovers, wandering among the hemlocks, happen on a clearing with a few turfed mounds, and seat themselves on these last ruins of an ancient fort, nor care

to remember even its name. Behind them—behind the Adirondacks and the Green Mountains—and pushed but a little way back in these hundred-and-fifty years, lies the primeval forest, trodden no longer now by the wasting redman, but untamed yet, almost unhandselled. And still, as the holiday-makers leave it, winter closes down on the lakeside and wraps it in silence, broken by the loon's cry or the crash of a snow-laden tree deep in the forest—the same sounds, the same aching silence, endured by French and English garrisons watching each other and the winter through in Fort Carillon or Fort William Henry.

“The world's great age begins anew.” . . . It begins anew, and hourly, wherever hearts are high and youth sets out with bright eyes to meet his fate. It began anew for Ensign John à Cleeve on this morning of July 5, 1758; it was sounded up by bugles, shattering the forest silence; it breathed in the wind of the boat's speed shaking the silken flag above him. His was one of twelve hundred boats spreading like brilliant water-fowl across the lake which stretched for thirty miles ahead, gay with British uniforms, scarlet and gold, with Highland tartans, with the blue jackets of the Provincials; flash of oars, innumerable glints of steel, of epaulettes, of

belt, cross belt and badge ; gilt knops and tassels and sheen of flags. Yonder went Blakeney's 27th Regiment, and yonder the Highlanders of the Black Watch ; Abercomby's 44th, Howe's 55th with their idolised young commander, the 60th or Royal Americans in two battalions ; Gage's Light Infantry, Bradstreet's axemen and batteau-men, Starke's rangers ; a few friendly Indians—but the great Johnson was hurrying up with more, maybe with five hundred ; in all fifteen thousand men and over. Never had America seen such an armament ; and it went to take a fort from three thousand Frenchmen.

No need to cover so triumphant an advance in silence ! Why should not the regimental bands strike up ? For what else had we dragged them up the Hudson from Albany and across the fourteen-mile portage to the lake ? Weary work with a big drum in so much brushwood ! And play they did, as the flotilla pushed forth and spread and left the stockades far behind ; stockades planted on the scene of last year's massacre. Though for weeks before our arrival Bradstreet and his men had been clearing and building, sights remained to nerve our arms and set our blood boiling to the cry "Remember Fort William Henry !" Its shores fade, and somewhere at the foot of the lake three thou-

sand Frenchmen are waiting for us (if indeed they dare to wait). Let the bands play "Britons strike home!"

Play they did: drums tunding and bagpipes skirling as though Fort Carillon (or Ticonderoga, as the Indians called it) would succumb like another Jericho to their clamour. The Green Mountains tossed its echoes to the Adirondacks, and the Adirondacks flung it back; and under it, down the blue waterway toward the Narrows, went Ensign John à Cleeve, canopied by the golden flag of the 46th.

The lake smiled at all his expectations and surpassed them. He had imagined it a sepulchral sheet of water, sunk between cavernous woods. And lo! it lay high in the light of day, broad-rimmed, with the forests diminishing as they shelved down to its waters. The mountains rimmed it, amethystine, remote, delicate as carving, as vapours almost transparent; and within the rim it twinkled like a great cup of champagne held high in a god's hand—so high that John à Cleeve, who had been climbing ever since his regiment left Albany, seemed lifted with all these flashing boats and uniforms upon a platform where men were heroes, and all great deeds possible, and the mere air laughed in the veins like wine.

Two heavy flat-boats ploughed alongside of his ; deep in the bows and yawing their sterns ludicrously. They carried a gun a-piece, and the artillerymen had laded them too far forward. To the 46th they were a sufficiently good joke to last for miles. "Look at them up-tailed ducks a-searching for worms ! Guns ? Who wants guns on this trip ? Take 'em home before they sink and the General loses his temper." The crews grinned back and sweated and tugged, at every third drive drenching the bowmen with spray, although not a breath of wind rippled the lake's surface.

The boat ahead of John's carried Elliott the Senior Ensign of the 46th, with the King's colours—the flag of Union, drooping in stripes of scarlet, white, and blue. On his right strained a boat's crew of the New York regiment, with the great patroon, Philip Schuyler himself, erect in the stern sheets and steering, in blue uniform and three-cornered hat ; too grand a gentleman to recognise our Ensign, although John had danced the night through in the Schuylers' famous white ballroom on the eve of marching from Albany, and had flung packets of sweetmeats into the nursery windows at dawn and awakened three night-gowned little girls to blow kisses after him as he

took his way down the hill from the Schuyler mansion. That was a month ago. To John it seemed years since he had left Albany and its straight sidewalks dappled with maple shade : but the patroon's face was the same, sedately cheerful now as then when he had moved among his guests with a gracious word for each and a brow unclouded by the morrow.

Men like Philip Schuyler do not suffer to-morrows to perturb them, since to them every morrow dawns big with duties, responsibilities, risks. John caught himself wondering to what that calm face looked forward, at the lake-end, where the forests slept upon their shadows and the mountains descended and closed like fairy gates. For John himself Fame waited beyond those gates. Although in the last three or four weeks he had endured more actual hardships than in all his life before, he had enjoyed them thoroughly and felt that they were hardening him into a man. He understood now why the tales he had read at school in his Homer and Ovid—tales of Ulysses, of Hercules and Perseus—were never sorrowful, however severe the heroes' labours. For were they not undergone in just such a shining atmosphere as this?

His mind ran on these ancient tales, and

so, memory reverting to Douai and the seminary class-room in which he had first construed them, he began unconsciously to set the lines of an old repetition-lesson to the stroke of the oars.

Angustam amice pauperiem pati
robustus acri militia puer
condiscat et Parthos feroces
vexet eques metuendus hasta :

Vitamque sub divo et trepidis agat
in rebus . . .

—and so on, with halts and breaks where memory failed him. *Parthos*—these would be the Indians—Abenakis, Algonquins, Hurons, whomsoever Montcalm might have gathered yonder in the woods with him. *Dulce et decorum est*—yes, to be sure ; in a little while he would be facing death for his country ; but he did not feel in the least like dying. A sight of Philip Schuyler's face sent him sliding into the next ode—*Justum et tenacem . . . non voltus instantis tyranni*. . . . John à Cleeve would have started had the future opened for an instant and revealed the face of the tyrant Philip Schuyler was soon to defy : and Schuyler would have started too.

Then John remembered his cousin's letter, and pulled it from his pocket again. . . .

“And if Abercromby’s your Cæsar—which is as much as I’ll risk saying in a letter which may be opened before it reaches you—why, you have Howe to clip his parade wig as he’s already docked the men’s coat-tails. So here’s five pounds on it, and let it be a match—Wolfe against Howe, and shall J. à C. or R. M. be first in Quebec? And another five pounds, if you will, on our epaulettes: for I repeat to you, this is Pitt’s consulship, and promotion henceforth comes to men as they deserve it. Look at Wolfe, sir—a man barely thirty-two—and the ball but just set rolling! Wherefore I too am resolved to enter Quebec a Brigadier-General, who now go carrying the colours of the 17th to Louisbourg. We but wait Genl. Amherst, who is expected daily, and then yeo-heave-ho for the nor’ard! Farewell, dearest Jack! Given in this our camp at Halifax, the twelfth of May, 1758, in the middle of a plaguy fog, by your affect. cousin—R. Montgomery.”

John smiled as he folded up the letter, so characteristic of Dick. Dick was always in perfect spirits, always confident in himself. It was characteristic of Dick, too, to call himself Romulus and his friend Remus, meaning no slight, simply because he always took himself for granted as the leading spirit.

It had always been so even in the days when they had gone birds'-nesting or rook-shooting together in the woods around John's Devonshire home. Always John had yielded the lead to this freckled Irish cousin (the kinship was, in fact, a remote one and lay on their mother's side through the Ranelagh family); and years had but seemed to widen the three months' gap in their ages.

Dick's parents were Protestant; and Dick had gone to Trinity College, Dublin, passing thence to an ensigncy in the 17th (Forbes') Regiment. The à Cleeves, on the other hand, had always been Roman Catholics, and by consequence had lived for generations somewhat isolated among the Devon gentry, their neighbours. When John looked back on his boyhood, his prevailing impressions were of a large house set low in a valley, belted with sombre dripping elms and haunted by Roman Catholic priests—some fat and rosy—some lean and cadaverous—but all soft-footed; of an insufficiency of light in the rooms; and of a sad lack of fellow-creatures willing to play with him. His parents were old, and he had been born late to them—twelve years after Philip, his only brother and the heir. From the first his mother had destined him for the priesthood, and a succession of priests had been his tutors: but—

What instinct is there in the sacerdotal mind which warns it off some cases as hopeless from the first? Here was a child, docile, affectionate, moody at times, but eager to please and glad to be rewarded by a smile; bred among priests and designed to be a priest; yet amid a thousand admonishments, chastisements, encouragements, blandishments, the child—with a child's sure instinct for sincerity—could not remember having been spoken to sincerely, with heart open to heart. Years later, when in the seminary at Douai the little worm of scepticism began to stir in his brain and grow, feeding on the books of M. Voltaire and other forbidden writings, he wondered if his many tutors had been, one and all, unconsciously prescient. But he was an honest lad. He threw up the seminary, returned to Cleeve Court, and announced with tears to his mother (his father had died two years before) that he could not be a priest. She told him, stonily, that he had disappointed her dearest hopes and broken her heart. His brother—the Squire now, and a prig from his cradle—took him out for a long walk, argued with him as with a fractious child, and, without attending to his answers, finally gave him up as a bad job. So an ensigncy was procured, and John à Cleeve shipped from Cork to Halifax, to fight

the French in America. At Cork he had met and renewed acquaintance with his Irish cousin, Dick Montgomery. They had met again in Halifax, which they reached in separate transports, and had passed the winter there in company. Dick clapped his cousin on the back and laughed impartially at his doubts and the family distress. Dick had no doubts ; always saw clearly and made up his mind at once ; was, moreover, very little concerned with religion (beyond damning the Pope), and a great deal concerned with soldiering. He fascinated John, as the practical man usually fascinates the speculative. So Remus listened to Romulus and began to be less contrite in his home-letters. To the smallest love at home (of the kind that understands, or tries to understand) he would have responded religiously ; but he had found such nowhere save in Dick—who, besides, was a gallant young gentleman, and scrupulous on all points of honour. He took fire from Dick ; almost worshipped him ; and wished now, as the flotilla swept on and the bands woke louder echoes from the narrowing shore, that Dick were here to see how the last few weeks had tanned and hardened him.

The troops came to land before nightfall at Sabbath Day Point, twenty-five miles down

the lake; stretched themselves to doze for a while in the dry undergrowth; re-embarked under the stars and, rowing on through the dawn, reached the lake-end at ten in the morning. Here they found the first trace of the enemy—a bridge broken in two over the river which drains into Lake Champlain. A small French rear-guard loitered here; but two companies of riflemen were landed and drove it back into the woods, without loss. The boats discharged the British unopposed, who now set forward afoot through the forest to follow the left bank of the stream, which, leaving the lake tranquilly, is broken presently by stony rapids and grows smooth again only as it nears its new reservoir. Smooth, rapid, and smooth again, it sweeps round a long bend; and this bend the British prepared to follow, leaving a force to guard the boats.

Howe led, feeling forward with his light infantry; and the army followed in much the same disposition they had held down the lake; regulars in the centre, provincials on either flank; a long scarlet body creeping with broad blue wings—or so it might have appeared to a bird with sight able to pierce the overlacing boughs. To John à Cleeve, warily testing the thickets with the butt of his staff and pulling the thorns aside lest they should rip its precious silken folds, the advance, after the

first ten minutes, seemed to keep no more order than a gang of children pressing after blackberries. Somewhere on his right the rapids murmured; men struggled beside him—now a dozen redcoats, now a few knowing Provincials who had lost their regiments, but were cocksure of the right path. And always—before, behind and all around him—sounded the calls of the parade-ground:—“Sub-divisions—left front—mark time! Left, half turn! Three files on the left—left turn—wheel!—files to the front!” Singular instructions for men grappling with a virgin forest!

If the standing trees were bad, the fallen ones—and there seemed to be a diabolical number of them—were ten times worse. John was straddling the trunk of one and cursing vehemently when a sound struck on his ears, more intelligible than any parade-call. It came back to him from the front: the sharp sound of musketry—two volleys.

The parade-calls ceased suddenly all around him. He listened, still sitting astride the trunk. One or two redcoats leaped it, shouting as they leaped, and followed the sound, which crackled now as though the whole green forest were on fire. By-and-by, as he listened, a mustachioed man in a short jacket—one of Gage’s light infantry—came

bursting through the undergrowth, capless, shouting for a surgeon.

"What's wrong in front?" asked John, as the man—scarcely regarding him—laid his hands on the trunk to vault it.

"Faith, and I don't know, redcoat; except that they've killed him. Whereabouts is the General?"

"Who's killed?"

"The best man amongst us: Lord Howe!"

A second runner, following, shouted the same news; and the two passed on together in search of the General. But already the tidings had spread along the front of the main body, as though wafted by a sudden wind through the undergrowth. Already, as John sat astride his log endeavouring to measure up the loss, to right and left of him bugles were sounding the halt. It seemed that as yet the mass of troops scarcely took in the meaning of the rumour, but awoke under the shock only to find themselves astray and without bearings.

John's first sense was of a day made dark at a stroke. If this thing had happened, then the glory had gone out of the campaign. The army would by-and-by be marching on, and would march again to-morrow; the drill cries would begin again, the dull wrestle through swamps and thickets; and in due

time the men would press down upon the French forts and take them. But where would be the morning's cheerfulness, the spirit of youth which had carried the boats down the lake amid laughter and challenges to race, and at the landing-place set the men romping like schoolboys? The longer John considered, the more he marvelled at the hopes he and all the army had been building on this young soldier—and not the army only, but every colony. Messengers even now would be heading up the lake as fast as paddles could drive them, to take horse and gallop smoking to the Hudson, to bear the tidings to Albany, and from Albany ride south with it to New York, to Philadelphia, to Richmond. “Lord Howe killed!” From that long track of dismay John called his thoughts back to himself and the army. Howe—dead? He, that up to an hour ago had been the pivot of so many activities, the centre on which veterans rested their confidence, and from which young soldiers drew their high spirits, the one commander whom the Provincials trusted and liked because he understood them; for whom and for their faith in him the regulars would march till their legs failed them! Wonderful how youth and looks and gallantry and brains together will grip hold of men and sway

their imaginations ! But how rare the alliance, and on how brittle a hazard resting ! An unaimed bullet—a stop in the heart's pulsation—and the star we followed has gone out, God knows whither. The hope of fifteen thousand men lies broken and sightless in a forest glade. They assure us that nothing in this world perishes, nor in the firmament above it : but we look up at the black space where a star has been quenched and know that something has failed us which to-morrow will not bring again.

It was learnt afterwards that he had been killed by the first shot in the campaign. Montcalm had thrown out three hundred rangers overnight under Langy to feel the British advance : but so dense was the tangle that even these experienced woodmen went astray during the night and, in hunting for tracks, blundered upon Howe's light infantry at unawares. In the moment of surprise each side let fly with a volley, and Howe fell instantly, shot through the heart.

The British bivouacked in the woods that night. Toward dawn John à Cleeve stretched himself, felt for his arms, and lay for a while staring up at a solitary star visible through the overhanging boughs. He was wondering what had awakened him, when his ears grew aware of a voice in the distance, singing—

either deep in the forest or on some hillside to the northward : a clear tenor voice shaken out on the still air with a *tremolo* such as the Provençals love. It sang to the army and to him :—

Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre :

Mironton, mironton, mirontaine !

Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre :

—Ne sais quand riviendra !

CHAPTER II

A BIVOUAC IN THE FOREST

THROUGH the night, meanwhile, Montcalm and his men had been working like demons.

The stone fort of Ticonderoga stood far out on a bluff at the head of Lake Champlain, its base descending on the one hand into the still lake-water, on the other swept by the river which the British had been trying to follow, and which here, its rapids passed, disembogues in a smooth strong flood. It stood high, too, over these meeting waters ; but as a military position was next to worthless, being dominated, across the river on the south, by a loftier hill called Rattlesnake Mountain.

Such was Ticonderoga ; and hither Montcalm had hurried up the Richelieu River from the north to find Bourlamaque, that good fighter, posted with the regiments of La Reine, Béarn, and Guienne, and a few Canadian regulars and militia. He himself had brought the battalions of La Sarre and De

Berry—a picked force, if ever there was one, but scarcely above three thousand strong.

A couple of miles above the fort and just below the rapids, a bridge spanned the river. A saw-mill stood beside it : and here Montcalm had crossed and taken up his quarters, pushing forward Bourslamaque to guard the upper end of the rapids, and holding Langy ready with three hundred rangers to patrol the woods on the outer side of the river's loop.

But when his scouts and Indians came in with the news of the British embarking on the upper shore, and with reports of their multitude, Montcalm perceived that the river could not be held ; and, having recalled Bourslamaque and broken down the bridges above and below the rapids, withdrew his force again to Ticonderoga, leaving only Langy's rangers in the further woods to feel the enemy's approach.

Next he had to ask himself, Could the fort be defended? All agreed that it could not, with Rattlesnake Mountain overtopping it : and the most were for evacuating it and retiring up Lake Champlain to the stronger French fort on Crown Point. But Montcalm was expecting Lévis at any moment with reinforcements ; and studying the ridge at the extreme end of which the fort stood, he decided that the position ought not to be

abandoned. This ridge ran inland, its slope narrowed on either side between the river and the lake by swamps, and approachable only from landward over the *col*, where it broadened and dipped to the foot-hills. Here, at the entrance to the ridge, and half a mile from his fort, he commanded his men to throw up an entrenchment and cut down trees ; and while the sappers fell to work he traced out the lines of a rude star-fort, with curtains and jutting angles from which the curtains could be enfiladed. Through the dawn, while the British slept in the woods, the Frenchmen laboured, hacking and felling. Scores of trees they left to lie and encumber the ground : others they dragged, unlopped, to the entrenchment, and piled them before it, trunks inward and radiating from its angles ; lacing their boughs together or roughly pointing them with a few strokes of the axe.

In the growing daylight the *chevaux-de-frise* began to look formidable ; but Bourlamaque, watching it with Montcalm, shook his head, hunched his shoulders, and jerked a thumb toward a spur of Rattlesnake Mountain, by which their defences were glaringly commanded.

Montcalm said, "We will risk it. Those English Generals are inconceivable."

"But a cannon or two——"

“If he think of them! Believe me, who have tried: you never know what an English General will do—or what his soldiers won’t. Pile the trees higher, my braves—more than breast-high—mountain-high if time serves! But this Abercromby comes from a land where the bees fly tail-foremost by rule.”

“With all submission, I would still recommend Crown Point.”

“Should he, by chance, think of planting a gun yonder, I feel sure that notion will exclude all others. We shall open the door and retreat on Crown Point unmolested.”

Bourlamaque drew in a long breath and emitted it in a mighty *pouf*!

“I am not conducting his campaign for him,” said his superior calmly. “God forbid! I once imagined myself in his predecessor’s place, the Earl of Loudon’s, and within twenty minutes France had lost Canada. I shudder at it still!”

Bourlamaque laughed. Montcalm had said it with a whimsical smile, and it passed him unheeded that the smile ended in a contracting of the brows and a bitter little sigh. The fighter judged war by its victories; the strategist by their effects. Montcalm could win victories; even now, by putting himself into what might pass for his adversary’s mind, he hoped to snatch a success against odds.

But what avails it to administer drubbings which but leave your foe the more stubbornly aggressive? British Generals blundered, but always the British armies came on. War had been declared three years ago; actually it had lasted for four; and the sum of its results was that France, with her chain of forts planted for aggression from the St. Lawrence to the Ohio, had turned to defending them. His countrymen might throw up their caps over splendid repulses of the foe, and hail such for triumphs; but Montcalm looked beneath the laurels.

The British, having slept the night in the woods, were mustered at dawn and marched back to the landing-place. Their General, falling back upon common sense after the loss of a precious day, was now resolved to try the short and beaten path by which Montcalm had retreated. It formed a four-mile chord, with the loop of the river for arc, and presented no real difficulty except the broken bridge, which Bradstreet was sent forward to repair.

But though beaten and easy to follow, the road was rough; and Abercromby—in a sweating hurry now—determined to leave his guns behind. John à Cleeve, passing forward with his regiment, took note of them as they lay unlimbered amid the brushwood by the

landing-stage, and thought little of it. He had his drill-book by heart, relied for orders on his senior officers, and took pride in obeying them smartly. This seemed to him the way for a young soldier to learn his calling; for the rest, war was a game of valour and would give him his opportunity. Theoretically he knew the uses of artillery, but he was not an artilleryman; nor had he ever felt the temptation to teach his grandmother to suck eggs. His cousin Dick's free comments upon white-headed Generals of division and brigade he let pass with a laugh. To Dick, the Earl of Loudon was "a mournful thickhead," Webb "a mighty handsome figure for a poltroon," Sackville "a discreet footman for a ladies' drum," and the ancestors of Abercromby had all been hanged for fools. Dick, very much at his ease in Sion, would have court-martialled and cashiered the lot out of hand. But John's priestly tutors had schooled him in diffidence, if in nothing else.

His men to-day were in no pleasant humour, and a few of them—veterans too—grumbled viciously as they passed the guns. "Silence in the ranks!" shouted the captain of his company; and the familiar words soothed him, and he wondered what had provoked the grumbling. A minute later he

had forgotten it. The column crawled forward sulkily. The shadow of Howe's loss lay heavy on it, and a sense that his life had been flung away. They had been marched into a jungle and marched back again, with nothing to show for it but twenty-four wasted hours. On they crawled beneath the sweltering July heat ; and coming to the bridge, found more delays.

Bradstreet and his men had worked like heroes, but the bridge would not be ready to carry troops before the early morning. A wooden saw-mill stood beside it, melancholy and deserted ; and here the General took up his quarters, while the army cooked its supper and disposed itself for the night in the trampled clearing around the mill and in the forest beyond. The 46th lay close alongside the river, and the noise of Bradstreet's hammers on the bridge kept John for a long while awake and staring up at the high western ridges, black as ink against the radiance of a climbing moon. In the intervals of hammering, the swirl of the river kept tune in his ears with the whir-r-r of a saw in the rear of the mill, slicing up the last planks for the bridge. There was a mill in the valley at home, and he had heard it a hundred times making just such music with the stream that ran down from Dartmoor and past Cleeve

Court. His thoughts went back to Devonshire, but not to linger there; only to wonder how much love his mother would put into her prayers could she be reached by a vision of him stretched here with his first battle waiting for him on the morrow. He wondered, not bitterly, if her chief reflection would be that he had brought the unpleasant experience on himself when he might have been safe in a priest's cassock. He laughed. How little she understood him, or had ever understood!

His heart went out to salute the morrow—and yet soberly. Outside of his simple duties of routine he was just an unshaped subaltern, with eyes sealed as yet to war's practical teachings. To him, albeit he would have been puzzled had any one told him so, war existed as yet only as a spiritual conflict in which men proved themselves heroes or cowards: and he meant to be a hero. For him everything lay in the will to dare or to endure. He recalled tales of old knights keeping vigil by their arms in solitary chapels, and he questioned the far hill-tops and the stars—What substitute for faith supported *him*? Did he believe in God? Yes, after a fashion—in some tremendous and overruling Power, at any rate. A Power that had made the mountains yonder?

Yes, he supposed so. A loving Power—an intimate counsellor—a Father attending all his steps? Well, perhaps; and, if so, a Father to be answered with all a man's love: but, before answering, he honestly needed more assurance. As for another world and a continuing life there, should he happen to fall to-morrow, John searched his heart and decided that he asked for nothing of the sort. Such promises struck him as unworthy bribes, belittling the sacrifice he came prepared to make. He despised men who bargained with them. Here was he, young, abounding in life, ready to risk extinction. Why? For a cause (some might say), and that cause his country's. Maybe: he had never thought this out. To be sure he was proud to carry the regimental colours, and had rather belong to the 46th than to any other regiment. The honour of the 46th was dear to him now as his own. But why, again? Pure accident had assigned him to the 46th: as for love of his country, he could not remember that it had played any conspicuous part in sending him to join the army. The hammering on the bridge had ceased without his noting it, and also the whirr of the saw. Only the river sang to him now: and to the swirl of it he dropped off into a dreamless, healthy sleep.

CHAPTER III

TICONDEROGA

AT the alarm-post next morning the men were in high spirits again. Every one seemed to be posted in the day's work ahead. The French had thrown up an outwork on the landward end of the ridge ; an engineer had climbed Rattlesnake Mountain at day-break and conned it through his glass, and had brought down his report two hours ago. The white-coats had been working like niggers, helped by some reinforcements which had come in overnight—Lévis with the Royal Roussillon, the scouts said : but the thing was a rough and ready affair of logs and the troops were to carry it with the bayonet. John asked in what direction it lay, and thumbs were jerked towards the screening forest across the river. The distance (some said) was not two miles. Colonel Beaver, returning from a visit to the saw-mill, confirmed the rumour. The 46th would march in a couple of hours or less.

At breakfast Howe's death seemed to be forgotten, and John found no time for solemn thoughts. Bets were laid that the French would not wait for the assault, but slip away to their boats; even with Lévis they could scarcely be four thousand strong. Bradstreet, having finished his bridge, had started back for the landing-stage to haul a dozen of the lighter batteaux across the portage and float them down to Lake Champlain filled with riflemen. Bradstreet was a glutton for work—but would he be in time? That old fox Montcalm would never let his earths be stopped so easily, and to pile defences on the ridge was simply to build himself into a trap. A good half of the officers maintained that there would be no fighting.

Well, fighting or no, some business was in hand. Here was the battalion in motion; and, to leave the enemy in no doubt of our martial ardour, here were the drums playing away like mad. The echo of John's feet on the wooden bridge awoke him from these vain shows and rattlings of war to its real meaning, and his thoughts again kept him solemn company as he breasted the slope beyond and began the tedious climb to the right through the woods.

The scouts, coming in one by one, reported them undefended: and the battalion,

though perforce moving slowly, kept good order. Towards the summit, indeed, the front ranks appeared to straggle and extend themselves confusedly : but the disorder, no more than apparent, came from the skirmishers returning and falling back upon either flank as the column scrambled up the last five hundred yards and halted on the fringe of the clearing. Of the enemy John could see nothing : only a broad belt of sunlight beyond the last few tree-trunks and their green eaves. The advance had been well timed, the separate columns arriving and coming to the halt almost at clockwork intervals ; nor did the halt give him much leisure to look about him. To the right were drawn up the Highlanders, their dark plaids blending with the forest glooms. In the space between, Beaver had stepped forward and was chatting with their colonel. By-and-by the dandified Gage joined them, and after a few minutes' talk Beaver came striding back, with his scabbard tucked under his armpit, to be clear of the undergrowth. At once the order was given to fix bayonets, and at a signal the columns were put in motion and marched out upon the edge of the clearing.

There, as he stepped forth, the flash of the noonday sun upon lines of steel held

John's eyes dazzled. He heard the word given again to halt, and the command "Left, wheel into line!" He heard the calls that followed—"Eyes front!" "Steady," "Quick march," "Halt, dress"—and felt, rather than saw, the whole elaborate manœuvre; the rear ranks locking up, the covering sergeants jigging about like dancers in a minuet—pace to the rear, side step to the right—the pivot men with stiff arms extended, the companies wheeling up and dressing; all happening precisely as on parade.

What, after all, was the difference? Well, to begin with, the clearing ahead in no way resembled a parade-ground, being strewn and criss-crossed with fallen trees and inter-set with stumps, some cleanly cut, others with jagged splinters from three to ten feet high. And beyond, with the fierce sunlight quivering above it, rose a mass of prostrate trees piled as if for the base of a tremendous bonfire. Not a Frenchman showed behind it. Was *that* what they had to carry?

"The battalion will advance!"

Yes, there lay the barrier; and their business was simply to rush it; to advance at the charge, holding their fire until within the breastwork.

The French, too, held their fire. The distance from the edge of the clearing to the

abattis was, at the most, a long musket-shot, and for two-thirds of it the crescent-shaped line of British ran as in a paper-chase, John à Cleeve vaulting across tree-trunks, leaping over stumps, and hurrahing with the rest.

Then with a flame the breastwork opened before him, and with a shock as though the whole ridge lifted itself against the sky—a shock which hurled him backward, whirling away his shako. He saw the line to right and left wither under it and shrink like parchment held to a candle flame. For a moment the ensign-staff shook in his hands, as if whipped by a gale. He steadied it, and stood dazed, hearkening to the scream of the bullets, gulping at a lump in his throat. Then he knew himself unhurt, and, seeing that men on either hand were picking themselves up and running forward, he ducked his head and ran forward too.

He had gained the abattis. He went into it with a leap, a dozen men at his heels. A pointed bough met him in the ribs, piercing his tunic and forcing him to cry out with pain. He fell back from it and tugged at the interlacing boughs between him and the log-wall, fighting them with his left, pressing them aside, now attempting to leap them, now to burst through them with his weight. The wall jetted flame through its crevices, and

the boughs held him fast within twenty yards of it. He could reach it easily (he told himself) but for the staff he carried, against which each separate twig hitched itself as though animated by special malice.

He swung himself round and forced his body backwards against the tangle; and a score of men, rallying to the colours, leapt in after him. As their weight pressed him down supine and the flag sank in his grasp, he saw their faces—Highlanders and red-coats mixed. They had long since disregarded the order to hold their fire; and were blazing away idly and reloading, cursing the boughs that impeded their ramrods. A corporal of the 46th had managed to reload and was lifting his piece when—a bramble catching in the lock—the charge exploded in his face, and he fell, a bloody weight, across John's legs. Half a dozen men, leaping over him, hurled themselves into the lane which John had opened.

Ten seconds later—but in such a struggle who can count seconds?—John had flung off the dead man and was on his feet again with his face to the rampart. The men who had hurried past him were there, all six of them; but stuck in strange attitudes and hung across the withering boughs like vermin on a gamekeeper's tree—corpses every one.

The rest had vanished, and, turning, he found himself alone. Out in the clearing, under the drifted smoke, the shattered regiments were re-forming for a second charge. Gripping the colours he staggered out to join them, and as he went a bullet sang past him and his left wrist dropped nerveless at his side. He scarcely felt the wound. The brutal jar of the repulse had stunned every sense in him but that of thirst. The reek of gunpowder caked his throat, and his tongue crackled in his mouth like a withered leaf.

Some one was pointing back over the tree-tops toward Rattlesnake Mountain; and on the slopes there, as the smoke cleared, sure enough, figures were moving. Guns? A couple of guns planted there could have knocked this cursed rampart to flinders in twenty minutes, or plumped round shot at leisure among the French huddled within. Where was the General?

The General was down at the saw-mill in the valley, seated at his table, penning a despatch. The men on Rattlesnake Mountain were Johnson's Indians—Mohawks, Oneidas, and others of the Six Nations—who, arriving late, had swarmed up by instinct to the key of the position and seated themselves there with impassive faces, ask-

ing each other when the guns would arrive and this stupid folly cease. They had seen artillery, perhaps, once in their lives ; and had learnt the use of it.

Oh, it was cruel ! By this time there was not a man in the army but could have taught the General the madness of it. But the General was down at the saw-mill, two miles away ; and the broken regiments re-formed and faced the rampart again. The sun beat down on the clearing, heating men to madness. The wounded went down through the gloom of the woods and were carried past the saw-mill, by scores at first, then by hundreds. Within the saw-mill, in his cool chamber, the General sat and wrote. Some one (Gage it is likely) sent down, beseeching him to bring the guns into play. He answered that the guns were at the landing-stage, and could not be planted within six hours. A second messenger suggested that the assault on the ridge had already caused inordinate loss, and that by the simple process of marching around Ticonderoga and occupying the narrows of Lake Champlain Montcalm could be starved out in a week. The General showed him the door. Upon the ridge the fight went on.

John à Cleeve had by this time lost count of the charges. Some had been feeble ; one

or two superb ; and once the Highlanders, with a gallantry only possible to men past caring for life, had actually heaved themselves over the parapets on the French right. They had gone into action a thousand strong ; they were now six hundred. Charge after charge had flung forward a few to leap the rampart and fall on the French bayonets ; but now the best part of a company poured over. For a moment sheer desperation carried the day ; but the white-coats, springing back off their platforms, poured in a volley and settled the question. That night the Black Watch called its roll : there answered five hundred men less one.

It was in the next charge after this—half-heartedly taken up by the exhausted troops on the right—that John à Cleeve found himself actually climbing the log-wall toward which he had been straining all the afternoon. What carried him there—he afterwards affirmed—was the horrid vision of young Sagamore of the 27th impaled on a pointed branch and left to struggle in death-agony while the regiments rallied. The body was quivering yet as they came on again ; and John, as he ran by, shouted to a sergeant to drag it off : for his own left hand hung powerless, and the colours encumbered his right. In front of him repeated charges

had broken a sort of pathway through the abattis, swept indeed by an enfilading fire from two angles of the breastwork, slippery with blood and hampered with corpses ; but the grape-shot which had accounted for most of these no longer whistled along it, the French having run off their guns to the right to meet the capital attack of the Highlanders. Through it he forced his way, the pressure of the men behind lifting and bearing him forward whenever the ensign-staff for a moment impeded him. He noted that the leaves, which at noon had been green and sappy, with only a slight crumpling of their edges, were now grey and curled into tight scrolls, crackling as he brushed them aside. How long had the day lasted, then ? And would it ever end ? The vision of young Sagramore followed him. He had known Sagramore at Halifax and invited him to mess one night with the 46th—as brainless and sweet-tempered a boy as ever muddled his drill.

John was at the foot of the rampart. While with his injured hand he fumbled vainly to climb it, someone stooped a shoulder and hoisted him. He flung a leg over the parapet and glanced down a moment at the man's face. It was the sergeant to whom he had shouted just now.

“Right, sir,” the sergeant grunted ;
“we’re after you !”

John hoisted the colours high and hurrahed.

“Forward ! Forward, Forty-sixth !”

Then, as a dozen men heaved themselves on to the parapet, a fiery pang gripped him by the chest, and the night—so long held back—came suddenly, swooping on him from all corners of the sky at once. The grip of his knees relaxed. The sergeant, leaping, caught the standard in the nick of time, as the limp body slid and dropped within the rampart.

CHAPTER IV

THE VOYAGEURS

Fringue, fringue sur la rivière ;
Fringue, fringue sur l'aviron !

THE man at the bow paddle set the chorus, which was taken up by boat after boat. John, stretched at the bottom of a canoe with two wounded Highlanders, wondered where he had heard the voice before. His wits were not very clear yet. The canoe's gunwale hid all the landscape but a mountain-ridge high over his right, feathered with forest and so far away that, swiftly as the strokes carried him forward, its serrated pines and notches of naked rock crept by him inch by inch. He stared at these and prayed for the moment when the sun should drop behind them. For hours it had been beating down on him. An Indian sat high in the stern, steering ; paddling rhythmically and with no sign of effort except that his face ran with sweat beneath its grease and vermilion. But not a feature of

it twitched in the glare across which, hour after hour, John had been watching him through scorched eyelashes.

Athwart the stern, and almost at the Indian's feet, reclined a brawn of a man with his knees drawn high—a French sergeant in a spick-and-span white tunic with the badge of the Béarnais regiment. A musket lay across his thighs, so pointed that John looked straight down its barrel. Doubtless it was loaded : but John had plenty to distract his thoughts from such a trifle—in the heat, the glare, the torment of his wounds, and, worst of all, the incessant coughing of the young Highlander beside him. The lad had been shot through the lungs, and the wound imperfectly bandaged. A horrible wind issued from it with every cough.

How many men might be seated or lying in the fore part of the canoe John could not tell, being unable to turn his head. Once or twice a guttural voice there growled a word of comfort to the dying lad, in Gaelic or in broken English. And always the bowman sang high and clear, setting the chorus for the attendant boats, and from the chorus passing without a break into the solo. “*En roulant ma boule*” followed “*Fringue sur l’aviron*” ; and from that the voice slid into a little love-chant, tender and delicate :

“ À la claire fontaine
M'en allant promener,
J'ai trouvé l'eau si belle
Que je m'y suis baigné.
Il y a longtemps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.”

“ Il y a longtemps que je t'aime,” broke in the chorus, the wide lake modulating the music as water only can. John remembered the abattis and all its slaughter, and marvelled what manner of men they were who, fresh from it, could put their hearts into such a song.

“ Et patati, et patata ! ” rapped in the big sergeant. “ For God's sake, Chameau, what kind of milk is this to turn a man's stomach ? ”

The chorus drowned his growls, and the bowman continued :

“ Sur la plus haute branche
Le rossignol, chantait,
Chante, rossignol, chante,
Toi qui as le cœur gai . . .
Chante, rossignol, chante,
Toi qui as le cœur gai ;
Tu as le cœur à rire,
Moi je l'ai à pleurer. . . . ”

“ Gr-r-r— ” As the song ended, the sergeant spat contemptuously over the gunwale. “ La-la-la, rossignol ! et la-la-la, rosier ! ” he mimicked. “ We are not *rosières*, my friend.”

“The song is true Canayan, m’sieur, and your comrades appear to like it.”

“Par exemple ! Listen, Monsieur Cham-eau, to something more in their line.” He inflated his huge lungs and burst into a ditty of his own :

“ C’est dans la ville de Bordeaux
Qu’est arrivé trois beaux vaisaux—
Qu’est arrivé trois beaux vaisaux :
Les matelots qui sont dedans,
Vrai Dieu, sont de jolis galants.”

The man had a rich baritone voice, not comparable indeed with the bowman’s tenor, yet not without quality ; but he used it affectedly, and sang with a simper on his face. His face, brick red in hue, was handsome in its florid way ; but John, watching the simper, found it detestable.

“ C’est une dame de Bordeaux
Qu’est amoureuse d’un matelot——”

Here he paused, and a few soldiers took up the refrain half-heartedly :

“ —— Va, ma servante, va moi chercher
Un matelot pour m’amuser.”

The song from this point became indecent, and set the men in the nearer boats laughing. At its close a few clapped their hands. But it was not a success, and the brick red darkened on the singer’s face ; darkened almost to purple when a voice in the distance took

up the air and returned it mockingly, caricaturing a *roulade* to the life with the help of one or two ridiculous gracenotes: at which the soldiers laughed again.

"I think, m'sieur," suggested the bowman politely, "they do not know it very well, or they would doubtless have been heartier."

But the sergeant had heaved himself up with a curse and a lurch which sent the canoe rocking, and was scanning the boats for the fellow who had dared to insult him.

"How the devil can a man sing while that dog keeps barking!" he growled, and let out a kick at the limp legs of the young Highlander.

Another growl answered. It came from the wounded prisoner behind John—the man who had been muttering in Gaelic.

"It is a coward you are, big man. Go on singing your sculduddery, and let the lad die quiet!"

The sergeant scowled, not understanding. John, whose blood was up, obligingly translated the reproof into French. "He says—and I also—that you are a cowardly bully; and we implore you to sing in tune, another time. Par pitié, monsieur, ne scalpez-vous pas les demi-morts!"

The shaft bit, as he had intended, and the man's vanity positively foamed upon it.

“Dog of a *ros-bif*, congratulate yourself that you are half dead, or I would whip you again as we whipped you yesterday, and as my regiment is even now again whipping your compatriots.” He jerked a thumb towards the south where, far up the lake, a pale saffron glow spread itself upon the twilight.

“The English are burning your fort, maybe,” John suggested amiably.

“They are burning the mill, more like—or their boats. But after such a defeat, who cares?”

“If our general had only used his artillery——”

“Eh, what is that you’re singing? *Ouida*, if your general had only used his artillery? My little friend, that’s a fine battle—that battle of ‘If.’ It is always won, too—only it has the misfortune never to be fought. So, so: and a grand battle it is too, for reputations. ‘*If* the guns had only arrived’; and ‘*if* the brigadier Chose had brought up the reserves as ordered’; and ‘*if* the right had extended itself, and that devil of a left had not straggled’—why then we should all be heroes, we *ros-bifs*. Whereas we came on four to one, and we were beaten; and we are being carried north to Montreal and our general is running south from an army one-third of his size and burning fireworks on

his way. And at Albany the ladies will take your standards and stitch '*If*' on them in gold letters a foot long. Eh, but it was a glorious fight—faith of Sergeant Barboux!"

And Sergeant Barboux, having set his vanity on its legs again, pulled out his pipe and skin of tobacco.

"Holà, M. le Chameau!" he called; "the gentleman desires better music than mine. Sing for him 'Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre!'"

M. le Chameau lifted his voice obediently; and thereupon John recognised the note and knew to whose singing he had lain awake in the woods so far behind and (it seemed) those ages ago.

He had been young then, and all possibilities of glory lay beyond the horizons to which he was voyaging. Darkness had closed down on them, but the beat of the paddles drove him forward. He stared up at the peering stars and tried to bethink him that they looked down on the same world that he had known—on Albany—Halifax—perhaps even on Cleeve Court in Devonshire. The bowman's voice, ahead in the darkness, kept time with the paddles:

"Il reviendra-z à Pâques—
Miron-ton, miron-ton, miron-taine!
Il reviendra-z à Pâques,
Ou—à la Trinité!"

Yes, the question was of returning, now ; a day had made that difference. Yet why should he wish to return ? Of what worth would his return be ? For weeks, for months, he had been living in a life ahead, towards which these paddles were faithfully guiding him ; and if the hope had died out of it, and all the colour, what better lay behind that he should seek back to it ?—a mother, who had shown him little love ; a brother, who coldly considered him a fool ; nearer, but only a little nearer—for already the leagues between seemed endless—a few friends, a few mess-mates . . .

His ribs hurt him intolerably ; and his wrist, too, was painful. Yet his wounds troubled him with no thought of death. On the contrary, he felt quite sure of recovering and living on, and on, on—in those unknown regions ahead . . .

“ La Trinité se passe—
Miron-ton, miron-ton, mirontaine !
La Trinité se passe—
Malbrouck ne revient pàs.”

What were they like, those regions ahead ? For he was young—less than twenty—and a life almost as long as an ordinary man’s might lie before him yonder. He remembered an old discussion with a seminary priest at Douai, on Nicodemus’s visit by night

and his question, "How can a man be born when he is old?" . . . and all his thoughts harked back to the Church he had left—that Church so Catholic, so far-reaching, so secure of herself in all climes and amid all nations of men. There were Jesuits, he knew, up yonder, beyond the rivers, beyond the forests. He would find that Church there, steadfast as these stars and, alone with them, bridging all this long gulf. In his momentary weakness the repose she offered came on him as a temptation. Had he but anchored himself upon her, all these leagues had been as nothing. But he had cut himself adrift; and now the world, too, had cut him off, and where was he with his doubts? . . . Or was she following now and whispering, "Poor fool, you thought yourself strong, and I granted you a short license; but I have followed, as I can follow everywhere, unseen, knowing the hour when you must repent and want me; and lo! my lap is open. Come, let its folds wrap you, and at once there is no more trouble; for within them time and distance are not, and all this voyage shall be as a dream."

No; he put the temptation from him. For it was a sensual temptation after all, surprising him in anguish and exhaustion and

bribing with promise of repose. He craved after it, but set his teeth. "Yes, you are right, so far. The future has gone from me, and I have no hopes. But it seems I have to live, and I am a man. My doubts are my doubts, and this is no fair moment to abandon them. What I must suffer, I will try to suffer. . . ."

The bowman had lit a lantern in the bows and passed back the resinous brand to an Indian seated forward, who in turn handed it back over John's head toward Sergeant Barboux, but, seeing that he dozed, crawled aft over the wounded men and set it to the wick of a second lantern rigged on a stick astern. As the wick took fire, the Indian, who had been steering hitherto hour after hour, grunted out a syllable or two and handed his comrade the paddle. The pair changed places, and the ex-steersman—who seemed the elder by many years—crept cautiously forward; the lantern-light, as he passed it, falling warm on his scarlet trowsers and drawing fiery twinkles from his belt and silver arm-ring.

With a guttural whisper he crouched over John, so low that his body blotted out the lantern, the stars, the whole dim arch of the heavens. Was this murder? John shut his teeth. If this were to be the end, let it come

now and be done with ; he would not cry out. The Highland lad had ceased his coughing and lay unconscious, panting out the last of his life more and more feebly. The elder Highlander moaned from time to time in his sleep, but had not stirred for some while. Forward the bowman's paddle still beat time like a clock, and away in the darkness other paddles answered it.

A hand was groping with the bandages about John's chest and loosening them gently until his wound felt the edge of the night wind. All his muscles stiffened to meet the coming stroke. . . .

The Indian grunted and withdrew his hand. A moment, and John felt it laid on the wound again, with a touch which charmed away pain and the wind's chill together—a touch of smooth ointment.

Do what he would, a sob shook the lad from head to foot.

“Thanks, brother !” he whispered in French. The Indian did not answer, but replaced and drew close the bandage with rapid hands, and so with another grunt crawled forward, moving like a shadow, scarcely touching the wounded men as he went.

For a while John lay awake, gazing up into the stars. His pain had gone, and he

felt infinitely restful. The vast heavens were a protection now, a shield flung over his helplessness. He had found a friend.

Why?

That he could not tell. But he had found a friend, and could sleep.

In his dreams he heard a splash. The young Highlander had died in the night, and Sergeant Barboux and the Indian lifted and dropped the body overboard.

But John à Cleeve slept on ; and still northward through the night, down the long reaches of the lake, the canoe held her way.

CHAPTER V

CONTAINS THE APOLOGUE OF MANABOZHO'S TOE

THEY had threaded their course through the many islets at the foot of the lake, and were speeding down the headwaters of the Richelieu. The forests had closed in upon them, shutting out the mountains. The convoy—officered for the most part by Canadian militiamen with but a sprinkling of regulars such as Sergeant Barboux—soon began to straggle. The prisoners were to be delivered at Montreal. Montcalm had despatched them thither, on short rations, for the simple reason that Fort Carillon held scarcely food enough to support his own army; but he could detach very few of his efficients for escort, and, for the rest, it did not certainly appear who was in command. Barboux, for example, was frankly insubordinate, and declared a dozen times a day that it did not become gentlemen of the Béarn and Royal Roussillon to take their orders from any

courreur de bois who might choose to call himself Major.

Consequently the convoy soon straggled at will, the boatmen labouring if the fancy took them, or resting their paddles across their thighs and letting their canoes drift on the current. Now and again they met a train of batteaux labouring up with reinforcements, that had heard of the victory from the leading boats and hurrahed as they passed, or shouted questions which Barboux answered as a conscious hero of the fight and with no false modesty. But for hour after hour John lived alone with his own boat's company and the interminable procession of the woods.

They descended to the river, these woods, and overhung it—each bank a mute monotonous screen of foliage, unbroken by glade or clearing; pine and spruce and hemlock, maple and alder; piled plumes of green, motionless, brooding, through which no sun-rays broke, though here and there a silver birch drew a shaft of light upon their sombre background. Here were no English woodlands, no stretches of pale green turf, no vistas opening beneath flattened boughs, with blue distant hills and perhaps a group of antlers topping the bracken. The wild life of these forests crawled among thickets

or lurked in sinister shadows. No bird poured out its heart in them ; no lark soared out of them, breasting heaven. At rare intervals a note fell on the ear—the scream of hawk or eagle, the bitter cackling laugh of blue jay or woodpecker, the loon's ghostly cry—solitary notes, and unhappy, as though wrung by pain out of the choking silence ; or away on the hillside a grouse began drumming, or a duck went whirring down the long waterway until the sound sank and was overtaken again by the river's slow murmur.

When night had hushed down these noises, the forest would be silent for an hour or two, and then awake more horribly with the howling of wolves. John slept little of nights ; not on account of the wolves, but because the mosquitoes allowed him no peace. (They were torture to a wounded man ; but he declared afterwards that they cured his wounded arm willynilly, for they forced him to keep it active under pain of being eaten alive.) By day he dozed, lulled by the eternal woods, the eternal dazzle on the water, the eternal mutter of the flood, the paddle-strokes, M. le Chameau's singing.

They were now six in the canoe—the sergeant, le Chameau, the two Indians, John à Cleeve and the elder Highlander, Corporal Hugh McQuarters.

By this time—that is to say, having seen him—John understood the meaning of M. le Chameau's queer name. He was a hunchback, but a gay little man nevertheless; reputedly a genius in the art of shooting rapids. He was also a demon to work, when allowed; but the sergeant would not allow him.

It suited the sergeant's humour to lag behind the other boats by way of asserting his dignity and proving that he, Barboux, held himself at no trumpery colonial's beck and call. Also he had begun to nurse a scheme; as will appear by-and-by.

At present, it amused him to order the canoe to shore for an hour or two in the heat of the day, lend his bayonet to the Indians, and watch, smoking, while they searched the banks and dug out musquashes. These they cooked and ate; which Barboux asserted to be good economy, since provisions were running short. It occurred to John that this might be a still better reason for hurrying forward, but he was grateful for the siesta under the boughs while the Indians worked. They were Ojibways both, the elder by name Menchwehna and the younger (a handsome fellow with a wonderful gift of silence) Muskingon.

Since that one stealthy act of kindness

Menehwehna had given no sign of cordiality. John had tried a score of times to catch his eye, and had caught it once or twice, but only to find the man inscrutable. Yet he was by no means taciturn; but seemed, as his war-paint of soot and vermilion wore thinner, to thaw into what (for an Indian) might pass for geniality. After a successful rat-hunt he would even grow loquacious, seating himself on the bank and jabbering while he skinned his spoils, using for the most part a jargon of broken French (in which he was fluent) and native words of which Barboux understood very few and John none at all. When he fell back on Ojibway pure and simple, it was to address Muskingon, who answered in monosyllables, and was sparing of these. Muskingon and McQuarters were the silent men of the party—the latter by force as well as choice, since he knew no French and in English could only converse with John. He and Muskingon had this further in common—they both detested the sergeant.

John, for his part, had patched up a peace with the man, after this fashion: On the second day Barboux had called upon le Chameau for a song; and, the little hunch-back having given "*En roulant ma boule*," demanded another.

“But it is monsieur’s turn, who has a charming voice,” suggested le Chameau politely.

“It has the misfortune to grate on the ears of our English milord,” Barboux answered with an angry flush, stealing a malevolent glance at John. “And I do not sing to please myself.”

John doubted this; but being by nature quick to forgive and repent a quarrel, he answered with some grace: “I was annoyed, Sergeant Barboux, and said what I thought would hurt rather than what was just. You possess, indeed, a charming voice, and I regret to have insulted it.”

“You mean it?” asked Barboux, still red in the face, but patently delighted.

“So entirely that I shall not pardon myself until you have done us the favour to sing.”

The sergeant held out his hand. “And that’s very handsomely said! Given or taken, an apology never goes astray between brave fellows. And, after all,” he added, “I had, if I remember, something the better of that argument! You really wish me to sing, then?”

“To be sure I do,” Jack assured him, smiling.

Barboux cleared his throat, wagged his

head once or twice impassively and trolled out :

“ Belle meunière, en passant par ici,
Ne suis-je t'y pas éloigné d'Italie. . . .”

From this graceful opening the song declined into the grossest filth ; and it was easy to see, watching his face, why McQuarters, without understanding a word of French, had accused him of singing “sculduddery.” John, though disgusted, could not help being amused by a performance which set him in mind now of a satyr and now of a mincing schoolgirl—*vert galant avec un sourire de cantatrice*—lasciviousness blowing affected kisses in the intervals of licking its chops. At the conclusion he complimented the singer, with a grave face.

Barboux bowed. “It has, to say true, a little more marrow in it than le Chameau’s *rossignols* and *rosiers*. Holà, Chameau ; the Englishman here agrees that you sing well, but that your matter is watery stuff. You must let me teach you one or two of my songlets——”

“Pardon, m’sieur, mais ça sera un peu trop—trop vif ; c’est-à-dire pour moi,” stammered the little hunchback.

Barboux guffawed. The idea of le Chameau as a ladies’ man tickled him hugely, and he tormented the patient fellow . .

with allusions to it, and to his deformity, twenty times a day.

And yet the sergeant was not ill-natured—until you happened to cross him, when his temper became damnable—but merely a big, vain, boisterous lout. John, having taken his measure, found it easy to study him philosophically and even to be passably amused by him. But he made himself, it must be owned, an affliction; and an affliction against which, since the boats had parted company, there was no redress. He was conceited, selfish, tyrannical, and inordinately lazy. He never took a hand with the paddle, but would compel the others to work, or to idle, as the freak took him. He docked the crew's allowance but fed himself complacently on more than full rations, proving this to be his due by discourse on the innate superiority of Frenchmen over Canadians, Englishmen or Indians. He would sit by the hour bragging of his skill with the gun, his victories in love, his feats of strength—baring his chest, arms, legs, and inviting the company to admire his muscles. He jested from sunrise until sundown, and never made a jest that did not hurt. Worst of all was it when he schooled le Chameau to sing his obscenities after him, line for line.

"No, no, I beg you, monsieur," the little fellow would protest, "c'est—c'est sale!"—and would blush like a girl.

"*Salé*, you dog? I'll teach you——" A blow would follow. M. Barboux was getting liberal with his blows. Once he struck Muskingon. Menehwehna growled ominously, and the growl seemed to warn not only Barboux but Muskingon, who for the moment had looked murderous.

John guessed that some tie, if not of blood-relationship, at least of strong affection, bound the two Indians together.

For himself, as soon as his wound allowed him to sit upright, which it did on the second day—the bullet having glanced across his ribs and left but its ugly track in the thin flesh covering them—the monotony of the woods and the ceaseless glint of the water were a drug which he could summon at will and so withdraw himself within a stupor untroubled by Barboux or his boastings. He suffered the man, but saw no necessity for heeding him.

He had observed two or three hanks of fishing-line dangling from the thin strips of cedar which sheathed the canoe within, a little below the gunwale. They had hooks attached, and from the shape of these hooks he judged them to belong to the Indians.

He unhitched one of the lines, and more for the sake of killing time than for any set purpose, began to construct a gaudy salmon-fly with a few frayed threads of cloth from his tunic. After a minute or two he was aware of Muskingon watching him with interest, and by signs begged for a feather from the young Indian's top-knot. Muskingon drew one forth and, under instructions, plucked off a piece of fluff from the root of the feather, a small quill or two, and handed them over. With a length of red silk drawn from his sash John, within half an hour, was bending a very pretty fly on the hook. It did not in the least resemble any winged creature upon earth; but it had a meretricious air about it, and even a "killing" one when he finished up by binding its body tight with an inch of gilt thread from his collar. Meanwhile, his ambition growing with success, he had cast his eyes about, to alight on a long jointed cane which the canoe carried as part of its appanage, to be lifted on cross-legs and serve as the ridge of an awning on wet nights. It was cumbrous, but flexible in some small degree. Muskingon dragged it within reach and sat watching while John whipped a loop to its end and ran the line through it.

He had begun in pure idleness, but now

the production of the rod had drawn every one's eyes. Barboux was watching him superciliously, and Menehwehna with grave attention, resting his paddle on his knees while the canoe drifted. Fish had been leaping throughout the afternoon—salmon by the look of them. John knew something of salmon; he had played and landed many a fish out of the Dart above Totnes, and in his own river below Cleeve Court. The sun had dropped behind the woods, the water was not too clear, and in short it looked a likely hour for feeding. He lifted his clumsy rod in his right hand, steadied it with his injured left, and put all his skill into the cast.

As he cast, the weight of his rod almost overbalanced him: a dart of pain came from his closing wound and he knew that he had been a fool and overtaxed his strength. But to his amazement a fish rose at once and gulped the fly down. He tossed the rod across to Muskingon, calling to him to draw it inboard and sit quite still; and catching the line, tautened it and slackened it out slowly, feeling up to the loop in which (as was to be expected) it had kinked and was sticking fast.

He had the line in both hands now, with Muskingon paying out the slack behind

him ; and if the hook held—the line had no gut—he felt confident of his fish. By the feel of him he was a salmon—or a black bass. John had heard of black bass and the sport they gave. A beauty, at any rate !

Yes, he was a salmon. Giving on the line but never slackening it, though it cut his forefinger cruelly (his left being all but useless to check the friction), John worked him to the top of the water and so, by little and little, to the side of the canoe. But his own strength was giving out, faster now than the salmon's. His wound had parted ; and as he clenched his teeth he felt the line fraying. The fish would have been lost had not Muskingon, almost without shaking the canoe, dropped overboard, dived under and clenched both hands upon his struggles.

It was Menehwehna who dragged the salmon across the gunwale ; for John had fainted. And when he recovered, Menehwehna was coolly gutting the monster—if a fish of eighteen pounds can be called a monster ; as surely he can when taken in such fashion.

After this, John being out of action, Sergeant Barboux must take a turn with the rod. He did not (he protested) count on landing a fish ; but the hooking of one had

been so ridiculously prompt and easy that it was hard to see how he could fail.

But he did. He flogged the water till nightfall, confidently at first though clumsily, at length with the air of a Xerxes casting chains into the flood ; but never a bite rewarded him. He gave over the rod in a huff, but began again at dawn, to lay it down after an hour and swear viciously. As he retired Muskingon took the pole ; he had watched John's one and only cast and began to imitate it patiently, while the sergeant jeered and the canoe drifted. Towards noon he felt a bite, struck, and missed ; but half an hour later he struck again and Menehwehna shouted and pointed as John's fly was sucked under in a noble swirl of water. Muskingon dragged back his rod and stretched out a hand for the line ; but Barboux had already run forward and clutched it, at the same moment roughly thrusting him down on his seat ; and then in a moment the mischief was done. The line parted, and the sergeant floundered back with a lurch that sent the canoe down to her gunwale.

McQuarters laughed aloud and grimly. Menehwehna's dark eyes shone. Even John, though the lurch obliged him to fling out both hands to balance the boat, and the

sudden movement sent a dart of pain through his wound, could not hold back a smile. Bárboux was furious.

“Eh? So you are pleased to laugh at me, master Englishman! Wait then, and we’ll see who laughs last. And you, dog of an Indian, at what are you rubbing your hands?”

“Your exploit, O illustrious warrior,” answered Menehwehna with gravity, “set me in mind of Manabozho; and when one thinks upon Manabozho it is permitted and even customary to rub the hands.”

“Who the devil was Manabozho?”

“He was a very Great One—even another such Great One as yourself. It was he who made the earth once on a time, by accident. And another time he went fishing.”

“Have a care, Menehwehna. I bid you beware if you are poking fun at me.”

“I am telling of Manabozho. He went fishing in the lake and let down a line. ‘King Fish,’ said he, ‘take hold of my bait,’ and he kept saying this until the King Fish felt annoyed and said, ‘This Manabozho is a nuisance. Here, trout, take hold of his line.’ The trout obeyed, and Manabozho shouted, ‘Wa-i-he! Wa-i-he! I have him!’ while the canoe rocked to and fro. But when he saw the trout he called, ‘Esa,

esa! Shame upon you, trout; I fish for your betters.' So the trout let go; and again Manabozho sank his line, saying, 'O King Fish, take hold of my bait.' 'I shall lose my temper soon with this fellow,' said the King Fish; 'here, sunfish, take hold of his line.' The sunfish did so, and Manabozho's canoe spun round and round; but when he saw what he had caught, he cried out, 'Esa, esa! Shame upon you, sunfish; I am come for your betters.' So the sunfish let go, and again Manabozho——"

"Joli amphigouri!" yawned the sergeant. "Pardon, M. Menehwehna, but this story of yours seems likely to last."

"Not so, O chief; for this time the King Fish took the bait and swallowed Manabozho, canoe and all."

John laughed aloud; but enough sense remained in Barboux to cover his irritation. "Well, that was the last of him, and the Lord be praised!"

"There is much more of the story," said Menehwehna, "and all full of instruction."

"We will postpone it, anyhow. Take up your paddle, if you have not forgotten how to work."

So Menehwehna and the hunchback paddled anew, while the great Barboux sat and sulked—a sufficiently childish figure. Night

fell, the canoe was brought to shore, and the Indians as usual lifted out the wounded men and laid them on beds of moss strewn with pine-boughs and cedar. While Menehwehna lit the camp fire, Muskingon prepared John's salmon for supper, and began to grill it deftly as soon as the smoke died down on a pile of clear embers.

John sleepily watched these preparations, and was fairly dozing when he heard Barboux announce with an oath that for his impudence the dog of an Englishman should go without his share of the fish. The announcement scarcely awoke him—the revenge was so petty. Barboux in certain moods could be such a baby that John had ceased to regard him except as an object of silent mirth. So he smiled and answered sweetly that Sergeant Barboux was entirely welcome ; for himself a scrap of biscuit would suffice. And with that he closed his eyes again.

But it seemed that, for some reason, the two Indians were angry, not to say outraged. By denying him his share Barboux had—no doubt ignorantly—broken some sacred law in the etiquette of hunting. Muskingon growled ; the firelight showed his lips drawn back, like a dog's, from his white teeth. Menehwehna remonstrated. Even le Chameau seemed to be perturbed.

Barboux, however, did not understand; and as nobody would share in John's portion, ate it himself with relish amid an angry silence, which at length impressed him.

"Eh? What the devil's wrong with you all?" he demanded, looking about him.

Menehwehna broke into a queer growl, and began to rub his hands. "Manabozho——" he began.

"Fichtre! It appears we have not heard the end of him, then?"

"It is usual," Menehwehna explained, "to rub one's hands at the mention of Manabozho. In my tribe it is even necessary."

"Farceur de Manabozho! the habit has not extended to mine," growled Barboux. "Is this the same story?"

"O slayer of heads, it is an entirely different one." The sergeant winced, and John cast himself back on his leafy bed to smile up at the branches. *Tueur de têtes* may be a high compliment from an Indian warrior, but a vocalist may be excused for looking twice at it.

"This Manabozho," Menehwehna continued tranquilly, "was so big and strong that he began to think himself everybody's master. One day he walked in the forest, cuffing the ears of the pine trees for sport,

and knocking them flat if they took it ill ; and at length he came on a clearing. In the clearing was a lodge, and in the lodge was no one but a small child, curled up asleep with its toe in its mouth. Manabozho gazed at the child for a long while, and said he, ' I have never seen any one before who could lie with his toe in his mouth. But I can do it, to be sure.' Whereupon he lay down in much the same posture as the child, and took his right foot in his hand. But it would not reach by a long way. ' How stupid I am,' cried Manabozho, ' when it was the left foot all the time ! ' So he tried the left foot, but this also would not reach. He rolled on his back, and twisted and bent himself, and strained and struggled until the tears ran down his face. Then he sat up in despair ; and behold ! he had awakened the child, and the child was laughing at him. ' Oh, oh ! ' cried Manabozho in a passion, ' am I then to be mocked by a babe ! ' And with that he drew a great breath and blew the child away over the mountains, and afterwards walked across and across the lodge, trampling it down until not a trace of it remained. ' After all,' said Manabozho, ' I can do something. And I see nobody hereabouts to deny that I can put my toe in my mouth ! ' "

As Menehwehna concluded, John waited for an explosion of wrath. None came. He raised his head after a minute and looked about him. Barboux sat smoking and staring into the camp-fire. The Indian had laid himself down to slumber, with his blanket drawn up to his ears.

CHAPTER VI

BATEESE

NEXT morning Barboux and Meneh-wehna held a long colloquy aft, but in tones so low that John could not catch a word. By-and-by Muskingon was called into council, and lastly le Chameau.

The two Indians were arguing against some proposal of the sergeant's, which by the way they pointed and traced imaginary maps with their fingers, spreading their palms apart to indicate distances, plainly turned on a point of geography. Le Chameau's opinion seemed to settle the dispute in the sergeant's favour. Coming that afternoon to the mouth of a tributary stream on the left bank he headed the canoe for it without a word, and at once the paddles were busy, forcing her against the rapid current.

Then followed days during which, though reason might prove that in the river he held an infallible clue, John's senses lost themselves in the forest maze. It overlapped and

closed upon him, folding him deeper and illimitably deeper. On the Richelieu he had played with thoughts of escape, noting how the canoe lagged behind its convoy, and speculating on the Indians' goodwill—faint speculations, since (without reckoning his own raw wound) McQuarters was almost too weak to stir as yet, and to abandon him would be, a scurvy trick. So he had put aside his unformed plans, which at the best had been little better than hopes ; and now the wilderness oppressed and smothered and buried them out of recollection.

The *voyageurs* made tedious progress ; for almost at once they came to a chain of rapids around which the canoe had to be ported. The Indians toiled steadily, and le Chameau too, stripped to the waist and sweating ; and by the end of the day each man carried a dark red weal on one shoulder, sunk in the flesh by the canoe's weight. John could walk, but was powerless to help, and McQuarters had to be lifted and carried with the baggage. Barboux confined himself to swearing and jeering at le Chameau's naked back—*diable de torse*, as he proclaimed it. The man was getting past endurance.

On the second day he called a halt, left le Chameau in charge of the camp and the

prisoners, and went off with the Indians in search of a moose, whose lowing call had twice echoed through the woods during the night and been answered by Menehwehna on his birch-horn. The forest swallowed them, and a blessed relief fell on the camp—no more oaths and gibes for a while, but rest and green shade and the murmur of the rapids below.

After the noon-day meal the hunchback stretched himself luxuriously and began to converse. He was explaining the situation with the help of three twigs, which he laid in the form of a triangle—two long sides and a short base.

“*Voyons*, this long one will be the Richelieu and that other the St. Lawrence; and here”—he put his finger near the base—“here is Montreal. The sergeant knows what he is about. Those other boats, look you, will go around so——.” He traced their course around the apex very slowly. “Whereas *we*——!” A quick stroke of the finger across the base filled up the sentence, and the little man smiled triumphantly.

“I see,” said John, picking up the short twig and bending it into an arch, “we are now climbing up this side of the slope, eh? And on the other there will likewise be a river?”

The boatman nodded. "A hard way to find, m'sieur. But have no fear. I have travelled it."

"Assuredly I have no fear with you, M.——"

"Guyon, m'sieur—Jean Bateese Guyon. This M. Barboux is a merry fellow—il ne peut pas se passer de ses enjouments. But I was not born like this." And here he touched his shoulder very simply and gravely.

"It was an accident then, M. Guyon?"

"An accident—oh, yes, be assured it was an accident." A flush showed on the little man's cheek, and his speech on a sudden became very rapid. "But as we were saying, I know the trail across yonder; and my brother Dominique he knows it even better. I wish we may see Dominique, m'sieur; there is no such *voyageur* from Quebec up to Michilimackinac, aye or beyond! He has been down the Cascades by night, himself only; it was when I had my—my accident, and he must go to fetch a surgeon. All along the river it is talked of yet. But it is nothing to boast of, for the hand of God must have been upon him. And as good as he is brave!"

"And where is your brother Dominique just now?"

“He will be at home, m’sieur. Soon they will be carrying the harvest at Boisveyrac, and he is now the seigneur’s farmer. He will be worrying himself over the harvest, for Dominique takes things to heart, both of this world and the next; whereas—I am a good Catholic, I hope—but these things do not trouble me. It seems there is no time to be troubled.” Bateese looked up shyly, with a blush like a girl’s. “M’sieur may be able to tell me—or, maybe, he will think it foolish. This love of women, now?”

“Proceed, M. Guyon.”

“Ah, you believe in it! When the sergeant begins his talk—*c’est bien sale*, is it not? But that is not the sort I mean. Well, Dominique is in love, and it brings him no happiness. He can never have what he wants, nor would it be right, and he knows it; but nevertheless he goes on craving for it and takes no pleasure in life for the want of it. I look at him, wondering. Then I say to myself, ‘Bateese, when *le bon Dieu* broke you in pieces He was not unkind. Your heart is cracked and cannot hold love, like your brother’s; but what of that, while God is pouring love into it all day long and never ceases? You are ugly, and no maid will ever want you for a husband; therefore you are lucky who cannot store away desire for this

or that one, like poor Dominique, who goes about aching and fit to burst. You go singing *À la claire fontaine*, which is full of unhappiness and longing, but all the while you are happy enough.' Indeed, that is the truth, monsieur. I study this love of Dominique's, which makes him miserable; but I cannot judge it. I see that it brings pain to men."

"But delight also, my friend."

"And delight also—that is understood. M'sieur is, perhaps, in love? Or has been?"

"No, Bateese; not yet."

"But you will; with that face it is certain. Now shall I tell you?—to my guessing this love of women is like an untried rapid. Something smiles ahead for you, and you push for it and *voyez!* in a moment down you go, fifteen miles an hour and the world spinning; and at the bottom of the fall, if the woman be good, sweet is the journey and you wonder, looking back from smooth water, down what shelves you were swept to her. That, I say, is what I suppose this love to be; but for myself I shall never try it. Since le bon Dieu broke the pitcher its pieces are scattered all over me, within; they hold nothing, but there they lie shining in their useless fashion."

"Not useless, perhaps, Bateese."

“In their useless fashion,” he persisted. “They will smile and be gay at the sight of a pretty girl, or at the wild creatures in the woods yonder, or at the thoughts in a song, or for no better reason than that the day is bright and the air warm. But they can store nothing. It is the same with religion, monsieur, and with affairs of State; neither troubles my head. Dominique is devout, for example; and Father Launoy comes to talk with him, which makes him gloomy. The reverend Father just hears my sins and lets me go; he knows well enough that Bateese does not count. And then he and Dominique sit and talk politics by the hour. The Father declares that all the English are devils, and that any one who fights for the Holy Church and is killed by them will rise again the third day.”

John laughed aloud this time.

“I too think the reverend Father must be making some mistake,” said Bateese gravely.

“No doubt he has been misinformed.”

“No doubt. For suppose now that I were a devil?”

“Oh, m’sieur,” Bateese expostulated. “*Ça serait bien dommage!* But I hope, in any case, God would pardon me for talking with you, seeing that to contain anything, even hatred, is beyond me.”

“Shall I tell you what I think, Bateese? I think we are all pitchers and perhaps made to be broken. Ten days ago I was brimful of ambitions; some one—le bon Dieu, or General Abercromby—has toppled me over and spilt them all; and here I lie on my side, not broken, but full of emptiness.”

“Heh, heh—‘full of emptiness’!” chuckled Bateese, to whom the phrase was new.

“It may be that in time some one will set me up again and pour into me wine of another sort. I hope for this, because it is painful to lie upset and empty; and I do not wish to be broken, for that must be even more painful—at the time, eh?”

Bateese glanced up, with a twitch of remembered pain.

“Indeed, m’sieur, it hurt—at the time.”

“But afterwards—when the pieces have no more trouble, being released from pride—the pride of being a pitcher! Is it useless they are as they lie upturned, reflecting—what? My friend, if we only knew this we might discover that now, when it can no longer store up wine for itself, the pitcher is at last serving an end it was made for.”

The little hunchback glanced up again quickly. “You are talking for my sake, monsieur, not for yourself. At your age I too could be melancholy for amusement.

Ah, pardon," for John had blushed hotly. "Do I not know why you said it? Am I not grateful?"

He held out his hand. His eyes were shining.

CHAPTER VII

THE WATCHER IN THE PASS

THENCEFORWARD, as the forest folded them deeper, John found a wonderful solace in Bateese's company, although the two seldom exchanged a word unless alone together, and after a day or two Bar-boux took a whim to carry off the little boatman on his expeditions and leave Muskingon in charge of the camp. He pretended that John, as he mended of his wound, needed a stalwart fellow for sentry; but the real reason was malice. For some reason he hated Muskingon; and knowing Muskingon's delight in every form of the chase, carefully thwarted it. On the other hand, it was fun to drag off Bateese, who loved to sit by his boat and hated the killing of animals.

"If I give him my parole," suggested John, "he will have no excuse, and Muskingon can go in your place."

But to this Bateese would not listen. So

the wounded were left, on hunting days, in Muskingon's charge; and with him, too, John contrived to make friends. The young Indian had a marvellous gift of silence, and would sit brooding for hours. Perhaps he nursed his hatred of Barboux; perhaps he distrusted the journey—for he and Menewehna, Ojibways both, were hundreds of miles from their own country, which lay at the back of Lake Huron. Now and again, however, he would unbend and teach John a few words of the Ojibway language; or would allow him, as a fellow-sportsman, to sit by the water's edge and study the Indian tricks of fishing.

There was one in particular which fairly amazed John. He had crawled after Muskingon on his belly—though not understanding the need of this caution—to the edge of a rock overhanging a deep pool. The Indian peered over, unloosed his waist-belt, and drew off his scarlet breeches as if for a bathe. But no, he did not intend this—at least, not just yet. He wound the breeches about his right arm and dipped it cautiously, bending over the ledge until his whole body from the waist overhung the water, and it was a wonder how his thighs kept their grip. Then, in a moment, up flew his heels and over he soused. John, peering down as the

swirl cleared, saw only a red-brown back heaving below ; and as the seconds dragged by, and the back appeared to heave more and more faintly, was plucking off his own clothes to dive and rescue Muskingon from the rocks, when a pair of hands shot up, holding aloft an enormous, bleeding cat-fish, and hitched him deftly on the gaff which John hurried to lower. But the fish had scarcely a kick left in him, Muskingon having smashed his head against the crevices of the rock.

Indeed Barboux had this excuse for leaving Muskingon in camp by the river—that there was always a string of fish ready before nightfall when he and Menehwehna returned. John, stupefied through the daylight hours, always seemed to awake with the lighting of the camp-fire. This at any rate was the one scene he afterwards saw most clearly, in health and in the delirium of fever—the fire ; the ring of faces ; beyond the faces a sapling strung with fish like short broad-swords reflecting the flames' glint ; a stouter sapling laid across two forked boughs, and from it a dead deer suspended, with white filmed eyes, and the firelight warm on its dun flank ; behind, the black deep of the forest, sounded, if at all, by the cry of a lonely wolf. These sights he recalled, with

the scent of green fir burning and the smart of it on his lashes.

But by day he went with senses lulled, having forgotten all desire of escape or return. These five companions were all his world. Was he a prisoner? Was Barboux his enemy? The words had no meaning. They were all in the same boat, and "France" and "England" had become idle names. If he considered Barboux's gun, it was as a provider of game, or a protector against any possible foe from the woods. But the woods kept their sinister silence.

Once, indeed, at the head of a portage they came upon a still reach of water with a strip of clearing on its farther bank—*bois brûlé* Bateese called it; but the fire, due to lightning no doubt, must have happened many years before, for spruces of fair growth rose behind the alders on the swampy shore, and tall wickup plants and tussocks of the blueberry choked the interspaces. A cool breeze blew down the waterway, as through a funnel, from the uplands ahead, and the falls below sang deafeningly in the *voyageurs'* ears as they launched their boat.

Suddenly Menehwehna touched Barboux by the elbow. His ear had caught the crackling of a twig amid the uproar. John, glancing up as the sergeant lifted his piece,

spied the antlers of a bull-moose spreading above an alder-clump across the stream. The tall brute had come down through the *bois brûlé* to drink, or to browse on the young spruce-buds, which there grew tenderer than in the thick forest; and for a moment moose and men gazed full at each other in equal astonishment.

Barboux would have fired at once had not Menehwehna checked him with a few rapid words. With a snort of disgust the moose turned slowly, presenting his flank, and crashed away through the undergrowth as the shot rang after him. Bateese and Muskingon had the canoe launched in a second, and the whole party clambered in and paddled across. But before they reached the bank the beast's hoofs could be heard drumming away on the ridge beyond the swamp and the branches snapping as he parted them.

Barboux cursed his luck. The two Indians maintained that the moose had been hit. At length Muskingon, who had crossed the swamp, found a splash of blood among the mosses, and again another on the leaves of a wickup plant a rod or two farther on the trail. The sergeant, hurrying to inspect these traces, plunged into liquid mud up to his knees, and was dragged out in the worst

of tempers by John, who had chosen to follow without leave. Bateese and McQuarters remained with the canoe.

Each in his own fashion, then, the trackers crossed the swamp, and soon were hunting among a network of moose-trails, which criss-crossed one another through the burnt wood. John, aware of his incompetence, contented himself with watching the Indians as they picked up a new trail, followed it for a while, then patiently harked back to the last spot of blood and worked off on a new line. Barboux had theories of his own, which they received with a galling silence. It galled him at length to fury, and he was lashing them with curses which made John wonder at their forbearance, when a call from the river silenced him.

It came from Bateese. Bateese, who cared nothing for sport, had paddled up stream to inspect the next reach of the river, and there, at the first ford, had found the moose lying dead and warm, with the ripple running over his flank and his gigantic horns high out of the water like a snag.

From oaths Barboux now turned incontinently to boasting. This was his first moose, but he—he, Joachim Barboux, was a sportsman from his birth. He still contended, but complacently and without rancour, that had

the Indians taken up the trail he had advised from the first it would have led them straight to the ford. They heard him and went on skinning the moose, standing knee deep in the bloody water, for the body was too heavy to be dragged ashore without infinite labour. Menehwehna found and handed him the bullet, which had glanced across and under the shoulder-blade, and flattened itself against one of the ribs on the other side. Barboux pocketed it in high good humour; and when their work was done—an ugly work, from which Bateese kept his eyes averted—a steak or two cut out, with the tongue, and the carcass left behind to rot in the stream—he praised them for brave fellows. They listened as indifferently as they had listened to his revilings.

This shot which slew the moose was the last fired on the upward journey. They had followed the stream up to the hill ridges, where rapid succeeded rapid; and two days of all but incessant portage brought them out above the forest, close beneath the naked ridges where but a few pines straggled.

Bateese pointed out a path by following which, as he promised, they would find a river to carry them down into the St. Lawrence. He unfolded a scheme. There were trees beside that farther stream—elm trees,

for example—blown down and needing only to be stripped; his own eyes had seen them. Portage up and over the ridge would be back-breaking work. Let the canoe, therefore, be abandoned—hidden somewhere by the head waters—and let the Indians hurry ahead and rig up a light craft to carry the party down stream. They had axes to strip the bark and thongs to close it at bow and stern. What more was needed? As for the loss of his canoe, he understood the sergeant's to be State business, requiring despatch; and if so, M. the Intendant at Montreal would recompense him. Nay, he himself might be travelling back this way before long, and then how handy to pick up a canoe on this side of the hills!

The sergeant *bravo*-ed and clapped the little man on his back, drawing tears of pain. The canoe was hauled up and stowed in a damp corner of the undergrowth under a mat of pine-branches, well screened from the sun's rays, and the travellers began to trudge on foot, in two divisions. The Indians led, with John and Barboux, the latter being minded to survey the country with them from the top of the ridge and afterwards allow them to push on alone. He took John to keep him company after their departure, and because the two prisoners could not well be

left in charge of Bateese, who besides had his hands full with the baggage. So Bateese and McQuarters toiled behind, the little man grunting and shifting his load from time to time with a glance to assure himself that McQuarters was holding out ; now and then slackening the pace, but still, as he plodded, measuring the slopes ahead with his eye, comparing progress with the sun's march, and timing himself to reach the ridge at nightfall. Barboux had proposed to camp there, on the summit. The Indians were to push forward through the darkness.

Meanwhile John stepped ahead with Barboux and the Indians. His spirits rose as he climbed above the forest ; the shadow which had lain on them slipped away and melted in the clear air. Here and there he stumbled, his knees reminding him suddenly of his weakness ; but health was coming back to him, and he drank in long pure draughts of it. It was good, after all, to be alive and young. A sudden throbbing in the air brought him to a halt ; it came from a tiny humming-bird poising itself over a bush-tufted rock on his right. As it sang on, careless of his presence, John watched the music bubbling and trembling within its flame-coloured throat. He, too, felt ready to sing for no other reason than pure delight.

He understood the ancient gods and their laughter ; he smiled down with them upon the fret of the world and mortal fate. Father Jove, *optimus maximus*, was a grand fellow, a good Catholic in spite of misconception, and certainly immortal ; god and gentleman both, large, lusty, superlative, tolerant, debonair. As for misconception, from this height Father Jove could overlook centuries of it at ease—the Middle Ages, for instance. Every one had been more or less cracked in the Middle Ages—cracked as fiddles. Likely enough Jove had made the Middle Ages, to amuse himself. . . .

As the climb lulled his brain, John played with these idle fancies. Barboux, being out of condition and scant of breath, conversed very little. The Indians kept silence as usual.

The sun was dropping behind the cleft of the pass as they reached it, and the rocky walls opened in the haze of its yellow beams. So once more John came to the gate of a new world.

Menhwehna led, Barboux followed, with John close behind, and Muskingon bringing up the rear. They were treading the actual pass, and Menhwehna, rounding an angle of the cliff, had been lost to sight for a moment, when John heard a low guttural cry

—whether of surprise or warning he could not tell.

He ran forward at Barboux's heels. A dozen paces ahead of the Indian, reclining against the rock-face on a heap of *scree*, in the very issue of the pass, with leagues of sunlight beyond him and the basin of the plain at his feet, sat a man.

He did not move ; and at first this puzzled them, for he lay dark against the sun, and its rays shone in their eyes.

But Menehwehna stepped close up to him and pointed. Then they saw, and understood.

The man was dead ; dead and scalped—a horrible sight.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FARTHER SLOPE

BARBOUX'S complexion had turned to a sick yellow beneath its mottles. He had been walking hard and was out of condition ; no doubt, too, the sunset light painted his colour deeper. But the man fairly twittered.

Menehwehna muttered an Indian name.

"Eh? Speak low, for the love of God!" The sergeant swept the cliffs above and around with a shuddering glance.

"Les Agniers, as you call them—but Iroquois for certain. The man, you see, is Canayen——" Menehwehna began coolly to handle the corpse. "He has been dead for hours, but not many hours." He lifted an arm and let it fall, after trying the rigidity of the muscles. "Not many hours," he repeated, and signed to Muskingon, who began to crawl forward and, from the gap of the pass, to reconnoitre the slope below.

“And in the interval they have been tracking *us*, belike?”

“They may, indeed, have spied us coming from the cliffs above,” answered Menehwehna unperturbed. “If so, they are watching us at this moment, and there is no escaping; but this we shall learn within twenty paces, since between the rocks here they have us at their will. You, O illustrious, they might suffer to promenade yourself for a while in the open, for the sake of better sport; with us, who are Ojibways, they would deal while yet they could be sure.”

He said it without any show of vanity, nor did he trouble himself to glance around or above for signs of the foe. “We had best make trial of this without delay,” he added; “for if they fire the noise may reach the other two and warn Bateese, who is clever and may yet save himself.”

“What the devil care I for Bateese?” snarled Barboux. “If they have tracked us, they have tracked all. I run no risks for a *bossu* and a useless prisoner.”

“I did not say that they have tracked us. *Him* they tracked beyond a doubt; and at the end he knew they were after him. See——” Again he lifted the arm of the corpse, and invited the sergeant to feel its shirt along the ribs and under the armpits.

"See you how stiff it is ; that is where the sweat has dried, and men sweat so when they are in a great hurry. Perhaps he was the last of his company, and they overtook him here. Now, see again—I tell you they have not been tracking us, and I will prove it. In the first place I am no fool, and if one—two—three men have tracked me close (it cannot be far) a day long without my knowing, it will be the first time in Menehwehna's life. But let that pass. See these marks ; they overtook him here, and they did with him—so. But where is any mark on the path behind us ? Look well ; there is only one path and no trail in it at all, else I had not cried out as I did. No man has passed within less time then it takes the moss to grow. Very good ; then whoever killed him followed him up from yonder, and here stopped and turned back—I think, in a hurry. To place the body so—that is an Iroquois trick when few and in a hurry ; otherwise they take him away and do worse."

"Iroquois ? But *que diable !* The Six Nations are at peace with us ! Why on earth should the Iroquois meddle with this man, by the dress of him a *courreur de bois* ? "

"And unarmed, too !" pursued Menehwehna with fine irony, "since they have taken away his gun. Ask me riddles that

I can read. The Six Nations are never at peace; there were five hundred of them back at Ticonderoga, seated on a hill opposite and only waiting. Yes, and in peace they have never less reasons than fingers and toes for killing a man. Your questions are for a child; but *I* say that the Iroquois have been here and killed this man, and in a hurry. Now answer me; if, after killing him, they wished to spy down upon our coming, and were in a hurry, why did they not take the short way through the pass?"

"That is simple. Any fresh track of men at the entrance, or close within it, would warn us back; therefore they would say, 'Let us climb to the ridge and watch, though it take longer.'"

"Good; now you talk with a clear head, and I have less fear for you. They may be aloft there, as you say, having drawn us into their trap. Yet I do not think it, for why should they be expecting us? It is now two days since you killed the moose. They could not have been near in a body to hear that shot fired, for it is hours since they overtook this man, following him up from the other slope. But a scout might have heard it and climbed across to warn them; yes, that is possible."

But here Muskingon came crawling back.

He had inspected the ground by the lip of the descent, and in his belief the dead man's pursuers were three or four at the most, and had hurried down the hill again when their work was done.

Menhwehna nodded gravely. "It is as I thought, and for the moment we need not fear; but we cannot spend the night in this trap—for trap it is, whether watched or not. Do we go forward then, or back?"

Barboux cursed. "How in the name of twenty devils can I go back! Back to the Richelieu?—it would be wasting weeks!" His hand went up to his breast, then he seemed to recollect himself and turned upon John roughly. "Step back, you, and find if the others are in sight. We, here, have private matters to discuss."

John obeyed. The first turn of the cliff shut off the warm westerly glow, and he went back through twilight. He knew now why Barboux had lagged behind on the Richelieu, in scorn of discipline. The man must be entrusted with some secret missive of Montcalm's, and, being puffed up with it, had in a luckless hour struck out a line of his own. To turn back now would mean his ruin; might end in his standing up to be shot with his back to a wall. . . .

Between the narrow walls of the pass night

was closing down rapidly. John lifted his face towards the strip of sky aloft, greenish-blue and tranquil. . . .

He fell back—his heart, after one leap, freezing—slowly freezing to a standstill ; his hands spreading themselves against the face of the rock.

What voice was that, screaming? . . . one—two—three—horrible human screams, rending the twilight, beating down on his ears, echoing from wall to wall. . . .

The third and last scream died out in a low, bubbling wail. Close upon it rose a sound which John could not mistake—the whoop of Indians. He plucked his hands from the rock, and ran ; but, as he turned to run, in the sudden silence a body thudded down upon the path behind him.

In twenty strides he was back again at the issue of the pass. The two Indians had vanished. Barboux's gross body alone blocked the pale daylight there. Barboux lingered a moment, stooping over the murdered man ; but he too ran at the sound of John's footsteps, and the corpse, as John came abreast of it, slid over in a silly heap, almost rolling against his legs.

He leaped aside and cleared it, and in a moment was pelting down the slope after the sergeant, who flung back an agonised

doubtful glance, and recognising his pursuer grunted with relief. At their feet, and far below, spread a wide plain—a sea of forest rolling, wave upon wave, with a gleam of water between. The river, then—Bateese's river—was near at hand.

Fifty yards down the slope, which was bare of cover, he saw the two Indians. Muskingon led by a few strides, and the pair seemed to be moving noiselessly ; yet, by the play of their shoulders, both were running for their lives. John raced past the lumbering sergeant and put forth all his strength to catch up with Menehwehna. The descent jarred his knees horribly, and still, as he plunged deeper into the shadow of the plain, the stones and bushes beneath his feet grew dimmer and the pitfalls harder to avoid. His ears were straining for the Indian war-whoop behind him ; he wondered more and more as the seconds grew into minutes and yet brought no sounds but the trickle and slide* of stones dislodged by Barboux thundering in the rear.

They were close upon the outskirts of the forest. He had caught up with Menehwehna and was running at his heels, stride for stride.

In the first dark shadow of the trees Menehwehna checked himself, came to a

sudden halt, and swung round, panting. Somehow, although unable to see his face, John knew him to be furiously angry—with the cold fury of an Indian.

“Englishman, you are a fool!”

“But why?” panted John innocently. “Is it the noise I made? I cannot run as you Indians can.”

Menehwehna grunted. “What matters noise more or less, when *he* is anywhere near?”

“They have not seen us!” gasped Barboux, blundering up at this moment and almost into John’s arms.

“To be sure,” answered Menehwehna sardonically, “they have not seen us. It may even be that the great Manitou has smitten them with deafness and they have not heard you, O illustrious!—and with blindness, that they cannot trace your footmarks; yes, and perchance with folly, too, so that, returning to a dead man whom they left, they may wonder not at all that he has tumbled himself about!”

“*Peste!* It was this Englishman’s fault. He came running behind and hurried me. But you Indians do not know everything. I found——” but here Barboux checked himself on the edge of a boast.

The Indian had sunk on one knee and laid

his ear to the ground. "It will be of great price," said he, "if what you found will take us out of this. They are not following as yet, and the water is near."

CHAPTER IX

MENEHWEHNA SETTLES ACCOUNTS

WEARY as they were, there could be no thought of halting. The river and the plain lay far below them yet, and they must push on through the darkness.

Hitherto the forest had awed John by its loneliness ; its night-voices, falling at rare intervals on his ear and awaking him from dreams beside the camp-fire, had seemed to cry and challenge across immense distances as though the very beasts were far astray. But now, as he crouched behind Menehwehna, he felt it to be no less awfully inhabited. A thousand creeping things stirred or slunk away through the undergrowth ; roosting birds edged towards one another in the branches, ever on the point of flapping off in panic ; the thickets were warm from the flanks of moose and deer. And all this wild life, withdrawing, watched the four fugitives with a thousand eyes.

These imaginary terrors did him one

service. They kept him awake. By-and-by his brain began to work clearly, as it often will when the body has passed a certain point of fatigue. "If these Indians on the ridge are Iroquois, why should I run? The Iroquois are friends of England, and would recognise my red coat. The man they killed was a Canadian, a *coureur de bois*; they will kill Barboux if they catch him, and also these two Ojibways. But to me capture will bring release."

He understood now why Menehwehna had called him a fool. Nevertheless, as he went, the screams on the cliff rang in his ears again, closing the argument.

Muskingon still led. He had struck a small mountain stream and was tracking it down towards the river—keeping wide of it to avoid the swampy ground, relying on his ears and the lie of the slope. Menehwehna followed close, ready to give counsel if needed; but the young Indian held on in silence, never once hesitating.

The debate in John's brain started afresh. "These Iroquois mean *me* no harm. I am sure enough of that, at any rate, to face the risk of it. Barboux is my enemy—my country's enemy—and I dislike in him the little I don't despise. As for Menehwehna and Muskingon—they, I suppose, are my

enemies, and the Iroquois my friends." Somehow John felt that when civilised nations employ uncivilised allies, the simplest questions of ethics may become complicated. He remembered a hundred small acts of kindness, of good-fellowship; and he recalled, all too vividly, the murdered man and his gory head.

But might he not escape back and show himself without lessening his comrades' chances? It was a nuisance that he must always be thinking of them as comrades. Was he not their prisoner? Would their comradeship help him at the end of the journey? . . .

The moon had risen over the hills when Muskingon's piloting brought them out once more under open sky, at a point where the mountain stream met and poured itself into a larger one hurrying down from the north-east. A few yards below their confluence the river-bed narrowed, and the waters, gathering speed, were swept down through a rocky chasm towards a cataract, the noise of which had been sounding in John's ears while he debated.

Hitherto he had weighed the question as one between himself and his three companions. For the moment he saw no chance of giving them the slip; and, if a chance

occurred, the odds must be terribly unequal. Still, supposing that one occurred, ought he to take it? Putting aside the insane risk, ought he to bring death—and such a death—down upon these three men, two of whom he looked upon as friends? Did his country, indeed, require this of him? He wished he had his cousin Dick beside him for counsellor, or could borrow Dick's practical mind. Dick always saw clearly.

And behold! as he stepped out upon the river bank, his wish was given him. He remembered suddenly that this Barboux carried a message—of what importance he could not tell, nor was it for him to consider. Important or not, it must be to England's detriment, and as a soldier, he had no other duty than to baulk it. Why had he not thought of this before? It ruled out all private questions, even that of escape or of saving his own life. The report of a gun would certainly be heard on the ridge above; and if, by forcing Barboux to shoot, he could draw down the Iroquois, why then—live or die—the signal must be given.

He scanned the chasm. It could not measure less than twenty feet across, and the current whirled through it far below—thirty feet perhaps. He eyed his companions. Barboux leaned on his gun a few paces from

the brink, where the two Indians stood peering down at the dim waters. John dropped on one knee, pretending to fasten a button of his gaiters, and drew a long breath while he watched for his chance.

Presently Muskingon straightened himself up and, as if satisfied with his inspection, began to lead the way again, slanting his course away from the bank and back towards the selvage of the woods. Menehwehna followed close, and Barboux shouldered his musket and fell into third place, grunting to John to hurry after.

And so John did—for a dozen paces back from the river. Then, swinging quickly on his heel, he dashed for the brink, and leapt.

So sudden was the manœuvre that not until his feet left the rock—it seemed, at that very instant—did he hear the sergeant's oath of dismay. Even as he flew across the whirling darkness, his ear was listening for the shot to follow.

The take-off—a flat slab of rock—was good, and the leap well timed. But he had allowed too little, perhaps, for his weariness and his recent wound ; and in the darkness he had not seen that of the two brinks the far one stood the higher by many inches. In mid-air he saw it, and flung his arms forward as he pitched against it little more than

breast high. His fingers clutched vainly for hold, while his toes scraped the face of the rock, but found no crevice to support them.

Had his body dropped a couple of inches lower before striking the bank, or had the ledge shelved a degree or two more steeply, or had it been smooth or slippery with rain, he must have fallen backward into the chasm. As it was, his weight rested so far forward upon his arms that, pressing his elbows down upon the rock, he heaved himself over on the right side of the balance, fell on his face and chest, and so wriggled forward until he could lift a knee.

The roar of the waters drowned all other noise. Only that faint cry of Barboux had followed him across. But now, as he scrambled to his feet, he heard a sudden thud on the ledge behind him. A hand clutched at his heel, out of the night. At once he knew that his stratagem had failed, that Barboux would not fire, that Muskingon was upon him. He turned to get at grips ; but, in the act of turning, felt his brain open and close again with a flame and a crash, stretched out both arms, and pitched forward into darkness.

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It seemed—for he knew no break in his sensations—that the ground, as he touched

it, became strangely soft and elastic. For a while he wondered at this idly, then opened his eyes—but only to blink and close them again, for they were met by broad daylight.

He was lying on the grass; he was resting in Muskingon's arms amid a roaring of many waters; he was being carried between Muskingon and Menehwehna beneath a dark roof of pines—and yet their boughs were transparent, and he looked straight through them into blue sky. Was he dead? Had he passed into a world where time was not, that all these things were happening together? If so, how came the two Indians here? And Barboux? He could hear Barboux muttering: no, shouting aloud. Why was the man making such a noise? And who was that firing? . . . Oh, tell him to stop! The breastwork will never be carried in this way—haven't the troops charged it again and again? Look at Sagamore, there: pull him off somebody and let him die quiet! For pity's sake fetch the General, to make an end of this folly! Forty-sixth! Where are the Forty-sixth? . . .

He was lying in a boat now—a canoe. But how could this be, when the boat was left behind on the other side of the mountain? Yet here it was, plain as daylight, and he was lying in it; also he could remem-

ber having been lifted and placed here by Muskingon—not by Menehwehna. To be sure Menehwehna crouched here above him, musket in hand. Between the shouting and firing he heard the noise of water tumbling over rapids. The noise never ceased; it was all about him; and yet the boat did not move. It lay close under a low bank, with a patch of swamp between it and the forest: and across this swamp towards the forest Muskingon was running. John saw him halt and lift his piece as Barboux came bursting through the trees with an Indian in pursuit. The two ran in line, the Indian lifting a tomahawk and gaining at every stride; and Muskingon had to step aside and let them come abreast of him before he fired at close quarters. The Indian fell in a heap; Barboux struggled through the swamp and leapt into the canoe as Muskingon turned to follow. But now three—four—five Indians were running out of the woods upon him; four with tomahawks only, but the fifth carried a gun; and, while the others pursued, this man, having gained the open, dropped swiftly on one knee and fired. At that instant Menehwehna's musket roared out close above John's head; but as the marksman rolled over, dead, on his smoking gun, Muskingon gave one leap like a

wounded stag's, and toppled prone on the edge of the bank close above the canoe.

And with that, and even as Menchwehna sprang to his feet to reach and rescue him, Barboux let fly an oath, planted the butt of his musket against the bank, and thrust the canoe off. It was done in a second. In another, the canoe had lurched afloat, the edge of the rapid whirled her bow round, and she went spinning down-stream.

All this John saw distinctly, and afterwards recalled it all in order, as it befell. But sometimes, as he recalled it, he seemed to be watching the scene with an excruciating ache in his brain; at others, in a delicious languor of weakness. He remembered too how the banks suddenly gathered speed and slid past while the boat plunged and was whirled off in the heart of the rapid. Muskingon had uttered no cry: but back—far back—on the shore sounded the whoops of the Iroquois.

Then—almost at once—the canoe was floating on smooth water and Menchwehna talking with Barboux.

“It had better be done so,” Menchwehna was saying. “You are younger than I, and stronger, and it will give you a better chance.”

“Don't be a fool,” growled Barboux.

“The man was dead, I tell you. They are always dead when they jump like that. *Que diable!* I have seen enough fighting to know.”

But Menehwehna replied, “You need much sleep and you cannot watch against me. I have reloaded my gun, and the lock of yours is wet. Indeed, therefore, it must be as I say.”

After this, Barboux said very little : but the canoe was paddled to shore and the two men walked aside into the woods. The sun was setting and they cast long shadows upon the bank as they stepped out.

John lay still and dozed fitfully, waking up now and then to brush away the mosquitoes that came with the first falling shadows to plague him.

By-and-by in the twilight Menehwehna returned and stood above the bank. He tossed a bundle into the canoe, stepped after it, and pushed off without hurry.

John laughed, as a child might laugh, guessing some foolish riddle.

“You have killed him !”

“He did wickedly,” answered Menehwehna. “He was a fool and past bearing.”

John laughed again ; and, being satisfied, dropped asleep.

CHAPTER X

BOISVEYRAC

ALONG the river-front of Boisveyrac, on the slopes between the stone walls of the Seigniory and the broad St. Lawrence, Dominique Guyon, the Seigneur's farmer, strode to and fro encouraging the harvesters.

“Work, my children! Work!”

He said it over and over again, using the words his father had always used at this season. But the harvesters—old Damase Juneau and his wife La Marmite, Jo Lagassé, the brothers Pierre and Telesphore Courteau, with Telesphore's half-breed wife Leelinau (Lélie, in French)—all knew the difference in tone. It had been worth while in former times to hear old Bonhomme Guyon say the words, putting his heart into them, while the Seigneur himself would follow behind, echoing, “Yes, that is so. Work, my children: work is the great cure!” But Bonhomme Guyon was dead these two months—rest his soul; and the

Seigneur gone up the river to command a fortress for the King of France ; and no one left at Boisveyrac but themselves and half a dozen militiamen and this young Dominique Guyon, who would not smile and was a skinflint.

It was as if the caterpillars had eaten the mirth as well as the profits out of this harvest which (if folks said true) the Seigneur needed so badly. Even the children had ceased to find it amusing, and had trooped after the priest, Father Launoy, up the hill and into the courtyard of the Château.

“Work, my friends !” said Dominique. He knew well that they detested him and would have vastly preferred his brother Bateese for overseer. For his part, he took life seriously : but no one was better aware of the bar between him and others’ love or liking.

They respected him because he was the best *canotier* on the river ; a better even than his malformed brother Bateese, now with the army. When he drew near they put more spirit into their pitchforking.

“But all the same it breaks the back, this suspense,” declared La Marmite. “I never could work with more than one thing in my mind. Tell us, Dominique Guyon : the good Father will be coming out soon, will

he not?—that is, if he means to shoot the falls before sunset.”

“What can it matter to you, mother?”

“Matter? Why if he doesn’t come soon, I shall burst myself with curiosity, that is all!”

“But you know all that can be told. There has been a great victory, for certain.”

“Eh? Eh? You are clever enough, doubtless; but you don’t think you can question and cross-question a man the way that Father Launoy does it? Why the last time I confessed to him he turned me upside down and emptied me like a sack.”

“There has been a great victory: that is all we need to know. Work, my friends, work with a good heart!”

But when his back was turned they drew together and talked, glancing now towards the Seigniory above the slope, now towards the river bank where a couple of tall Etchemin Indians stood guard beside a canoe, and across the broad flood to the woods on the farther shore stretching away southward in a haze of blue. Down in the south there, far beyond the blue horizon, a battle had been fought and a great victory won.

Jo Lagassé edged away towards Corporal Chrétien, who kept watch, musket in hand, on the western fringe of the clearing. Har-

vests at Boisveyrac had been gathered under arms since time out of mind, with sentries posted far up the shore and in the windmill behind the Seigniory, to give warning of the Iroquois. To-day the corporal and his men were specially alert, and at an alarm the workers would have plenty of time to take shelter within the gateway of the Château.

“Well, it seems that we may all lift up our hearts. The English are done for, and next season there is to be a big stamping-out of the Iroquois.”

“Who told you that, Jo Lagassé?”

“Every one is saying it. Pierre Courteau has even some tale that two thousand of them were slaughtered after the battle yonder—Onnontagués and Agniers for the most part. At this rate you idlers will soon be using your bayonets to turn the corn with the rest of us.”

“Yes ; that’s right—call us idlers ! And the Iroquois known to be within a dozen miles ! You would sing to another tune, my friend, if we idlers offered to march off and leave you just now.” The corporal swung round on his thin legs and peered into the belt of trees.

Jo Lagassé grinned.

“No, no, corporal ; I was jesting only. To think of me undervaluing the military !

Why often and often, as a single man with no ties, I have fancied myself enlisting. But now it will be too late."

"If M. de Montcalm has really swallowed the English," answered the other drily, "it will be too late, as you say."

"But these English, now—I have always had a curiosity to see them. Is it true, corporal, that they have faces like devils, and that he who has the misfortune to be killed by one will assuredly rise the third day? The priests say so."

Corporal Chrétien had never actually confronted his country's foes. "Much would depend," he answered cautiously, "upon circumstances, and upon what you mean by a devil."

While Jo Lagassé scratched his head over this, the wicket opened in the great gate of the Seigniory, and Father Launoy came forth with a troop of children at his heels. The harvesters crowded about him at once.

He lifted a hand. He was a tall priest and square-shouldered, with the broad brow and set square chin of a fighting man.

"My children," he announced in a voice clear as a bell, "it is certain there has been a great battle at Fort Carillon. The English came on, four to one, gnashing their teeth like devils of the pit. But the host of the

faithful stood firm and overcame them, and now they are flying southward whence they came. Let thanks be given to God who giveth us the victory !”

The men bared their heads.

“When I met ’Polyte Latulippe and young Damase on my way down the river, I could scarcely believe their tale. But the Ojibway puts it beyond doubt ; and the few answers I could win from the wounded sergeant all confirm the story.”

“His name, Father ?” asked La Marmite. “We can get nothing out of Dominique Guyon, who keeps his tongue as close as his fist.”

“His name is à Clive, and he is of the regiment of Béarn. He has come near to death’s door, poor fellow, and still lies too near to it for talking. But I think he is strong enough to bear carrying up to Fort Amitié, where the Seigneur—who, by the way, sends greeting to you all——”

“And our salutations go back to him. Would he were here to-day to see the harvest carried !”

“The Seigneur, having heard what ’Polyte and Damase have to tell, will desire to hear more of this glorious fight. For myself, I must hasten down to Montreal, where I have a message to deliver, and perhaps I may

reach there with these tidings also before the boats, which are coming up by way of the Richelieu. Therefore I am going to borrow Dominique Guyon of you, to pilot me down through the Roches Fendues. And talking of Dominique"—here the Jesuit laid a hand on the shoulder of the young man, who bent his eyes to the ground—"you complain that he is close, eh? How often, my children, must I ask you to judge a brother by his virtues? To which of you did it occur, when these men came, to send 'Polyte and Damase up to Fort Amitié with their news? No one has told me: yet I will wager it was Dominique Guyon. Who sat up, the night through, with this wounded stranger? Dominique Guyon. Who has been about the field all day, as though to have missed a night's sleep were no excuse for shirking the daily task? Dominique Guyon. Again, to whom do I turn now to steer me down the worst fall in the river? To Dominique Guyon. He will arrive back here to-night tired as a dog, but once more at daybreak it will be Dominique who sets forth to carry the wounded man up to Fort Amitié. And why? Because, when a thing needs to be done well, he is to be trusted; you would turn to him then and trust him rather than any of yourselves, and you know it. Do you

grumble, then, that the Seigneur knows it? I say to you that a man is born thus, or thus; responsible or not responsible; and a man that is born responsible, though he add pound to pound and field to field, is a man to be thankful for. Moreover, if he keep his own counsel, you may go to him at a pinch with the more certainty that he will keep yours."

"What did I tell you?" whispered La Marmite to Jo Lagassé, who had joined the little crowd. "The Father's eye turns you inside out: he knows how we have been grumbling all day. But all the same," she added aloud, "he is young and ought to laugh."

"I have told you," said Father Launoy, "that you should judge a man by his virtues: but, where that is hard, at least you should judge him by help of your own pity. All this day Dominique has been copying his dead father; and the same remembrance that has been to him a sorrowful incitement, has been to you but food for uncharitable thoughts. If I am not saying the truth, correct me."

They were silent. The priest had a great gift of personal talk, straight and simple; and treated them as brothers and sisters of a family, holding up the virtues of this one, or the faults of that, to the common gaze.

They might not agree with this laudation of Dominique : but no one cared to challenge it at the risk of finding himself pilloried for public laughter. Father Launoy knew all the peccadilloes of this small flock, and had a tongue which stripped your clothes off—to use an expression of La Marmite's.

They followed him down to the shore where the Etchemins held the canoe ready. There they knelt, and he blessed them before embarking. Dominique stepped on board after him, and the two Indians took up their paddles.

Long after the boat had been pushed off and was speeding down the broad waterway, the harvesters stood and watched it. The sunset followed it, gleaming along its wake and on its polished quarter, flashing as the paddles rose and dipped ; until it rounded the corner by Bout de l'Isle, where the rapids began.

The distant voice of these rapids filled the air with its humming ; but their ears were accustomed to it and had ceased to heed. Nor did they mark the evening croak of the frogs alongshore among the reed beds, until Jo Lagassé imitated it to perfection.

“To work, my children !” he croaked.
“Work is the only cure !”

They burst out laughing, and hurried back to gather the last load before nightfall.

CHAPTER XI

FATHER LAUNOY HAS HIS DOUBTS

FOR a little while after leaving the shore the priest kept silence.

“Dominique,” said he at length, “there is something in your guests that puzzles me; and something too that puzzles me in the manner of their coming to Boisveyrac. Tell me now precisely how you found them.”

“It was not I who found them, Father. Telesphore Courteau came running to me, a little before sunset, with news that a man—an Indian—was standing on the shore opposite and signalling with his arms as if for help. Well, at first I thought it might be some trick of the Iroquois—not that I had dreamed of any in the neighbourhood: and Chrétien got his men ready and under arms. But the glass seemed to show that this was not an Iroquois: and next I saw a bundle, which might be a wounded man, lying on the bank beside him. So we launched a boat and pushed across very carefully until

we came within hail : and then we parleyed for some while, the soldiers standing ready to fire, until the Indian's look and speech convinced me—for I have been as far west as Michilimackinac, and know something of the Ojibway talk. So when he called out his nation to me, I called back to him to leave speaking in French and use his own tongue."

"Yes, yes—he is an Ojibway beyond doubt."

"Well, Father, while I was making sure of this, we had pushed forward little by little and I saw the wounded man clearly. He was half-naked, but lay with his tunic over him, as the Indian had wrapped him against the chill. Indeed he was half-dead too, and past speaking, when at length we took him off."

"And they had lost their boat in the Cedars?"

"So the Ojibway said. The wonder is that they ever came to shore."

"The wonder to my thinking is rather that, coming through the wilderness from the Richelieu River, they should have possessed a canoe to launch on the Great River here."

"Their tale is that they were four, and happened on a small party of Iroquois by

surprise : and that two perished while this pair possessed themselves of the Iroquois' canoe and so escaped."

"Yes," mused the priest, "so again the Ojibway told me. A strange story : and when I began to put questions he grew more and more stupid—but I know well enough by this time, I should hope, when an Indian pretends to be duller than he is. The sick man I could not well cross-examine. He told me something of the fight at Fort Carillon, where he, it appears, saw the main fighting upon the ridge, while the Indians were spread as sharpshooters along the swamps below. For the rest he refers me to his comrade." Father Launoy fell to musing again. "What puzzles me is that he carries no message, or will not own to carrying one. But what then brings him across the Wilderness? The other boats with the wounded and prisoners went down the Richelieu to its mouth, and will be travelling up the Great River to Montreal—that is, if they have not already arrived. Now why should this one boat have turned aside? That I could understand, if the man were upon special service : the way he came would be a short cut either down the river to Montreal, or upstream to Fort Amitié or Fort Frontenac. But, as I say, this man apparently carries no

message. Also he started from Fort Carillon with two wounds; and who would entrust special service to a wounded man?"

"Of a certainty, Father, he was wounded, as I myself saw when we drew off his shirt. The hurt in his ribs is scarcely skinned over, and he has a fresh scar on his wrist. But the blow on the head, from which he suffers, is later, and was given him (he says) by an Indian."

"A bad blow—and yet he escaped."

"A bad blow. Either from that or from the drenching, towards morning his head wandered and he talked at full speed for an hour."

"Of what did he talk?" asked the priest quickly.

"That I cannot tell, since he chattered in English."

"English? How do you know that it was English?"

"Why, since it was not French, nor like any kind of Indian! Moreover, I have heard the English talk. They were prisoners brought down from Oswego, twelve batteaux in all, and I took them through the falls. When they talked, it was just as this man chattered last night."

"Then you, too, Dominique, find your guest a strange fellow?"

“Oh, as for that ! He is a sergeant, and of the regiment of Béarn. Your reverence saw his coat hanging by the bed.”

“Even in that there is something strange. For Béarn lies in the Midi, close to the Pyrenees ; and, as I understand, the regiment of Béarn was recruited and officered almost entirely from its own province. But this Sergeant à Clive comes from the north ; his speech has no taste of the south in it, and indeed he owns to me that he is a northerner. He says further that he comes from my own seminary of Douai. And this again is correct ; for I cross-questioned him on the seminary, and he knows it as a hand knows its glove—the customs of the place, the lectures, the books in use there. He has told me, moreover, why he left it. . . . Dominique, you do right in misliking your guest.”

“I do not say, Father, that I dislike him. I fear him a little—I cannot tell why.”

“You do right, then, to fear him ; and I will tell you why. He is an atheist.”

“An atheist ? O—oh !”

“He has been of the true Faith. But he rejected me ; he would make no confession, but turned himself to the wall when I exhorted him. *Voyons*—here is a Frenchman who talks English in his delirium ; a

northerner serving in a regiment of the south ; an infidel, from Douai. Dominique, I do not like your guest."

"Nor I, Father, since you tell me that he is an atheist."

While they talked they had been lifting their voices insensibly to the roar of the nearing rapids ; and were now come to Bout de l'Isle and the edge of peril. Below Bout de l'Isle the river divided to plunge through the Roches Fendues, where to choose the wrong channel meant destruction. Yet a mile below the Roches Fendues lay the Cascades, with a long straight plunge over smooth shelves of rock and two miles of furious water beyond. Yet further down came the terrible rapids of Lachine, not to be attempted. There the *voyageurs* would leave the canoe and reach Montreal on foot.

Father Launoy was a brave man. Thrice before he had let Dominique lead him through the awful dance ahead, and always at the end of it had felt his soul purged of earthly terrors and left clean as a child's.

Dominique reached out a hand in silence and took the paddle from the Etchemin, who crawled aft and seated himself with an expressionless face. Then with a single swift glance astern to assure himself that the

other Indian was prepared, the young man knelt and crouched, with his eyes on the V-shaped ripple ahead, for the angle of which they were heading.

On this, too, the priest's eyes were bent. He gripped the gunwale as the current lifted and swept the canoe down at a pace past control ; as it sped straight for the point of the smooth water, and so, seeming to be warned by the roar it met, balanced itself fore-and-aft for one swift instant and plunged with a swoop that caught away the breath.

The bows shot under the white water below the fall, lifted to the first wave, knocking up foam out of foam, and so dived to the next, quivering like a reed shaken in the hand. Dominique straightened himself on his knees. In a moment he was working his paddle like a madman, striking broad off with it on this side and that, forcing the canoe into its course, zigzagging within a hand's breadth of rocks which, at a touch, would have broken her like glass, and across the edge of whirlpools waiting to drown a man and chase his body round for hours within a few inches of the surface ; and all at a speed of fifteen to eighteen miles an hour, with never an instant's pause between sight and stroke. The Indian in the stern took his cue from Dominique ; now paddling

for dear life, now flinging his body back as with a turn of the wrist he checked the steerage.

The priest sat with a white drenched face ; a brave man terrified. He felt the floor of the world collapsing, saw its forests reeling by in the spray. It cracked like a bubble and was dissolved in rainbows—wisps caught in the rocks and fluttering in the wind of the boat's flight. Then, as the pressure on heart and chest grew intolerable, the speed began to slacken and he drew a shuddering breath ; but his brain still kept the whirl of the wild minutes past and his hand scarcely relaxed its grip on the gunwale. As a runaway horse, still galloping, drops back to control, so the canoe seemed to find her senses and leapt at the waves with a cunning change of motion, no longer shearing through their crests, but riding them with a long and easy swoop. Still Father Launoy did not speak. He sat as one for whom a door has been held half-open, and closed again, upon a vision.

Yet when he found his tongue—which was not until they reached the end of the white water, and Dominique, after panting awhile, headed the canoe for shore—his voice did not shake.

“ It was a bold thought of these men, or

a foolhardy, to strike across the Wilderness," he said meditatively, in the tone of one picking up a talk which chance has interrupted.

"There are many ways through those woods," Dominique answered. "Between here and Fort Niagara you may hear tell of a dozen perhaps ; and the Iroquois have their own."

"Let us hope that none of theirs crosses the one you and Bateese taught to Monsieur Armand. The Seigneur will be uneasy about his son when he hears what 'Polyte and Damase report ; and Monsieur Etienne and Mademoiselle Diane will be uneasy also."

"But this Ojibway saw nothing of M. Armand or his party."

"No news is good news. As you owe the Seigneur your duty, take your guests up to Fort Amitié to-morrow and let them be interrogated."

"My Father, must I go?" There was anguish in Dominique's voice. "Surely Jo Lagassé or Pierre Courteau will do as well?—and there is much work at Boisveyrac which cannot be neglected."

They had come to shore, and the priest had stepped out upon the bank after Dominique for a few parting words.

“But that is not your true reason?” He laid his hand on the young man’s shoulder and looked him in the eyes.

Dominique’s fell. “Father,” he entreated in a choking voice, “you know my secret : do not be hard on me ! ‘Lead us not into temptation’——”

“It will not serve you to run from yours. You must do battle with it. Bethink you that, as through the Wilderness, there are more ways than one in love, and the best is that of self-denial. Mademoiselle Diane is not for you, Dominique, her father’s *censitaire* : yet you may love her your life through, and do her lifelong service. To-morrow, by taking these men to Fort Amité, you may ease her heart of its fears : and will you fail in so simple a devoir ? There is too much of self in your passion, Dominique—for I will not call it love. Love finds itself in giving : but passion is always a beggar.”

“My Father, you do not understand——”

“Who told you that I do not understand ?” the priest interrupted harshly. “I too have known passion, and learnt that it is full of self and comes of Satan. Nay, is that not evident to you, seeing what mischief it has already worked in your life ? Think of Bateese.”

“Do I ever cease thinking of Bateese? Do I ever cease fighting with myself?” Dominique’s voice rose almost to a cry of pain. He stared across the water with gloomy eyes and added—it seemed quite inconsequently—“The Cascades is a bad fall, but I think it will be the Roches Fendues that gets me in the end.”

He said it calmly, wistfully : and, pausing for a moment, met the priest’s eyes.

“Your blessing, Father. I will go.”

He knelt.

Generations of *voyageurs*, upward bound, and porting their canoes to avoid the falls, had worn a track beside the river bank. Dominique made such speed back along it that he came in sight of Boisveyrac as the bell in the little chapel of the Seigniorie began to ring the Angelus. Its note came floating down the river distinct above the sound of the falls. He bared his head, and repeated his *Aves* duly.

“But all the same,” he added, working out the train of his thoughts as he gazed across the deserted harvest-fields, impoverished by tree-stumps, to the dense forest behind the Château, “let God confound the English, and New France shall belong to a new noblesse that have learned, as the old will not, to lay their hands on her wealth.”

CHAPTER XII

THE WHITE TUNIC

JOHN À CLEEVE lay on his bed in the guest-room of the Seigniory, listening to the sound of the distant falls.

That song was his anodyne. All day he had let it lull his conscience, rousing himself irritably as from a drugged sleep to answer the questions put to him by Dominique or the priest. Dominique's questions had been few and easily answered, the most of them relating to the battle.

"A brother of mine was there beyond doubt," he had wound up wistfully. "He is a batteau-man, by name Baptiste Guyon. But of course you will not know him?"

"Ils m'ont tiré pour la battue, moi," John had fenced him off with a feeble joke and a feeble laugh. (Why should he feel ashamed? Was this not war, and he a prisoner tricking his captors?)

But the priest had been a nuisance. Heaven be praised for his going!

And now the shadows were closing upon the room and in the hush of sunset the voice of the waters had lifted its pitch and was humming insistently, with but a semitone's fall and rise. During the priest's exhortations he had turned his face to the wall ; but now for an hour he had lain on his other side, studying the rafters, the furniture, the ray of sunlight creeping along the floor-boards and up the dark, veneered face of an *armoire* built into the wall. Behind the doors of it hung Sergeant Barboux's white tunic ; and sometimes it seemed to him that the doors were transparent and he saw it dangling like a grey ghost within.

It was to avoid this sight that he had turned to the wall when the priest began to interrogate him. Heavens! how incurably, after all, he hated these priests !

Menhwehna had answered most of the questions, standing by the bed's foot : and Menhwehna was seated there still in the dusk.

How many lies had Menhwehna told? John himself had told none, unless it were a lie to pronounce his name French-fashion—"John à Cleeve," "Jean à Clive." And, once more, was not this war?

For the rest and for his own part, it was astonishing how easily, the central truth

being hidden—that the tunic in the *armoire* was not his—the deception had run on its own wheels. Why, after all, should that tunic frighten him? He, John à Cleeve, had not killed its wearer. He had never buttoned it about him nor slipped an arm into one of its sleeves. Menehwehna had offered to help him into it and had shown much astonishment on being refused. John's own soiled regimentals they had weighted with a stone and sunk in the river, and he had been lying all but naked, with the accursed garment over his legs, when the rescue-party found them on the bank.

How many lies had Menehwehna told? John could remember the sound of two voices, the priest's and the Indian's, questioning and explaining; but the sound only. As soon as he shut his eyes and tried to recall the words, the priest's voice faded down the song of the falls, and only the Indian and himself were left, dropping—dropping—to the sound, over watery ledges and beneath pendant boughs. Then, as the walls of the room dissolved and the priest's figure vanished with them, Menehwehna's voice grew distinct. At one time it said: "What is done is done. Come with me, and we will go up through the Great Lakes, beyond Michilimackinac, to the Beaver Islands

which are in the mouth of Lake Michigan. There we will find the people of my tribe, and when the snow comes and they separate, you shall go with me to the wintering-grounds and learn to be a hunter."

In another dream the voice said: "You will not come because you weary of me and wish to leave me. We have voyaged together, and little by little my heart has been opened to you; but yours will not open in return. I would have made you to me all that Muskingon was; but you would not. When I killed that man, it was for your sake no less than Muskingon's. I told him so when he died. Of what avail is my friendship, brother, when you will give me none in exchange? . . .

In yet a third dream the canoe floated on a mirror, between a forest and the image of a forest. . . . His eyes followed the silver wake of a musk-rat swimming from shore to shore, and in his ear Menehwehna was saying, "Your head is weak yet: when it grows stronger you will wish to come. Muskingon struck you too hard—so—with the flat of his tomahawk. He did not mean it, but his heart was jealous that already so much of my love had passed over to you. Yet he was a good lad, and my daughter's husband. The White-coat called across the stream to

him, to kill you ; but he would not, nor would he bring you over the ford until we had made the White-coat promise that you should not be killed for trying to run away. The man could do nothing against us two ; but he bore ill-will to Muskingon afterwards, and left him to die when we could have saved him."

So, while John had lain senseless, fate had been binding him with cords—cords of guilt and cords of gratitude—and twining them inextricably. Therefore he feared sleep, because these dreams awoke him to pluck again at the knot of conscience. Ease came only with the brain's exhaustion, when in sheer weakness he could let slip the tangle and let the song of the rapids drug his senses once more.

He turned on his side and watched the sunbeam as it crept up the face of the *armoire*. "Menehwehna !" he called weakly.

From his seat in the corner among the shadows the Indian came and stood behind him.

"Menehwehna, this lying cannot go on ! Make you for this fort they talk of ; tell your tale there and push on to join your tribe. Let us fix a length of time, enough for your travel beyond reach, and at the end of it I will speak."

“And what will my brother tell them?”

“The truth—that I am no Frenchman but an English prisoner.”

“It is weakness makes you lose patience,” answered Menehwehna, as one might soothe a child. “Let the weak listen to the strong. All things I have contrived, and will contrive; there is no danger, and will be none.”

John groaned. How could he explain that he abhorred this lying? Worse—how could he explain that he loathed Menehwehna’s company and could not be friends with him as of old; that something in his blood, something deep and ineradicable as the difference between white man and red man, cried out upon the sergeant’s murder? How could he make this clear? Menehwehna—who had preserved his life, nursed him, toiled for him cheerfully, borne with him patiently—would understand only that all these pains had been spent upon an ingrate. John tugged away from the bond of guilt only to tighten this other yet more hateful bond of gratitude. He must sever them both, and in one way only could this be done. He and Menchwehna must part. “I do not fear to be a prisoner. Moreover, it will not be for long. The river leads, after all, to Quebec; and the English, if they take Louisbourg, will quickly push up that way.”

“The White-coat used to speak wisdom once in a while,” answered Menehwehna gravely. “‘It is a great battle,’ he said, ‘that battle of If; only it has the misfortune never to be fought.’ Take heart, brother, and come with me to the Isles du Castor. When your countrymen take Quebec you shall return to them, if you still have the mind, and I will swear that we held you captive. But to tell this needless tale is a sick man’s folly.”

John could not meet the Indian’s eyes, full as they were of a wondering simplicity. He feared they might read the truth—that his desire to escape was dead. During Father Launoy’s exhortations he had lain, as it were, with his ear against its cold heart; had lain secretly whispering it to awake. But it would not. The questions and cross-questions about Douai he had answered almost inattentively. What did it all matter?

The priest had been merely tedious. Back on Lake Champlain and on the Richelieu, when the world of his ken, though lost, lay not far behind him, his hope had been to escape and seek back to it; his comfort against failure the thought that here in the north one restful, familiar face awaited him—the face of the Church Catholic. Now the hope and the consolation were gone

together. Perhaps under the lengthening strain some vital spring had snapped in him, or the forests had slowly choked it, or it had died with a nerve of the brain under Muskingon's tomahawk.

He was not Sergeant à Clive of the regiment of Béarn ; but almost as little was he that Ensign John à Cleeve of the Forty-sixth who had entered the far side of the Wilderness.

He wanted only to be quit of Menehwehna and guilt. It would be a blessed relief to lie lost, alone, as a ball tossed into a large country. As he had fallen, so he prayed to lie ; empty in the midst of a great emptiness. The Communion of all the Saints could not comfort him now, since he had passed all need of comfort.

"You must go, Menehwehna. I will not speak until you are beyond reach."

"It is my brother that talks so. Else would I call it the twitter of a wren that has flown over. Is Menehwehna a coward, that he spoke with thought of saving himself?"

"I know that you did not," answered John, and cursed the knowledge. But the voice of the falls had begun to lull him. "We will talk of it to-morrow," he said drowsily.

"Yes, indeed ; for this is a thought of

sickness, that a man should choose to be a prisoner when by any means he may be free."

He found a tinder-box and lit the night-lamp—a wick floating in a saucer of oil: then, having shaken up John's pillow and given him to drink from a pannikin, went noiselessly back to his corner.

The light wavered on the dark panels of the *armoire*. While John watched, it fell into tune with the music of the distant falls. . . .

He awoke, with the rhythm of dance-music in his brain. In his dream the dawn was about him, and he stood on the lawn outside the Schuylers' great house above Albany. From the ballroom came the faint sound of violins, while he lingered to say good-bye to three night-gowned little girls in the window over the porch; and some way down the hill stood young Sagramore, of the Twenty-seventh, who was saying, "It is a long way to go. Do you think he is strong enough?"

Still in his dream John turned on him indignantly. And behold! it was not young Sagramore, but Dominique, standing by the bed and talking with Menehwehna.

"We are to start for the Fort, it appears," said Menehwehna to John.

"Let us first make sure," said Dominique, "that he is strong enough to dress." He

thrust his hand within the *armoire* and unhitched the white tunic from its peg.

John shrank back into his corner.

“Not that !” he stammered.

Across the lamp smoking in the dawn, Dominique stared at him.

CHAPTER XIII

FORT AMITIÉ

THE Fort stood high on a wooded slope around which the river swept through narrows to spread itself below in a lake three miles wide and almost thirty long. In shape it was quadrilateral with a frontage of fifty toises and a depth of thirty, and from each angle of its stone walls abutted a flanking tower, the one at the western angle taller than the others by a good twenty feet and surmounted by a flagstaff.

East, west, and south, the ground fell gently to the water's edge, entirely clear of trees : even their stumps had been uprooted to make room for small gardens in which the garrison grew its cabbages and pot-herbs ; and below these gardens the Commandant's cows roamed in a green riverside meadow. At the back a rougher clearing, two cannon-shots in width, divided the northern wall from the dark tangle of the forest.

The canoe had been sighted far down the

lake, and the Commandant himself, with his brother M. Etienne and his daughter Mademoiselle Diane, had descended to the quay to welcome the *voyageurs*. A little apart stood Sergeant Bédard, old Jérémie Tripier (formerly major-domo and general factotum at Boisveyrac, now at Fort Amitié promoted to be *maréchal des logis*), and five or six militiamen. And to John, as he neared the shore in the haze of a golden evening, the scene and the figures—the trim little fortress, the white banner of France transparent against the sky, the sentry like a toy figure at the gate, the cattle browsing below, the group at the river's brink—appeared as a tableau set for a child's play.

To add to the illusion, as the canoe came to the quay the sun sank, a gun boomed out from the tallest of the four towers, and the flag ran down its staff ; all as if by clockwork. As if by clockwork, too, the taller of the two old gentlemen on the quay—the one in a gold-laced coat—stepped forward with a wave of his hand.

“Welcome, welcome, my good Dominique ! It will be news you bring from Boisveyrac—more news of the great victory, perhaps ? And who are these your comrades ? ”

“ Your servant, Monseigneur ; and yours,

Monsieur Etienne, and yours, Mademoiselle Diane!" Dominique brought his canoe alongside and saluted respectfully. "All my own news is that we have gathered the harvest at Boisveyrac; a crop not far below the average, we hope. But Father Caunoy desired me to bring you these strangers, who will tell of matters more important."

"It is the wounded man—the sergeant from Fort Carillon!" cried Diane, clasping her hands.

"Eh, my child? Nonsense, nonsense—he wears no uniform, as you see. Moreover, 'Polyte Latulippe brought word that he was lying at the point of death."

"It is he, nevertheless."

"Mademoiselle has guessed rightly," said Dominique. "It is the wounded soldier. I have lent him an outfit."

The Commandant stared incredulously from Dominique to John, from John to Menehwehna, and back again to John. A delightful smile irradiated his face.

"Then you bring us a good gift indeed! Welcome, sir, welcome to Fort Amitié! where we will soon have you hale and strong again, if nursing can do it."

Here, if John meant to play his part, was the moment for him to salute. He half lifted his hand as he reclined, but let it fall

again. From the river-bank a pair of eyes looked down into his; dark grey eyes—or were they violet?—shy and yet bold, dim and yet shining with emotion. God help him! This child—she could be little more—was worshipping him for a hero!

“Nay, sir, give it to me!” cried the Commandant, stooping by the quay’s edge. “I shall esteem it an honour to grasp the hand of one who comes from Fort Carillon—who was wounded for France in her hour of victory. Your name, my friend?—for the messengers who brought word of you yesterday had not heard it, or perhaps had forgotten.”

“My name is à Cleeve, monsieur.”

“À Clive? à Clive? It is unknown to me, and yet it has a good sound, and should belong to *un homme bien né*?” He turned inquiringly towards his brother, a mild, elderly man with a scholar’s stoop and a face which assorted oddly with his uniform of captain of militia, being shrivelled as parchment and snuff-dried and abstracted in expression as though he had just lifted his eyes from a book. “À Clive, Etienne. From what province should our friend derive?”

M. Etienne’s eyes—they were, in fact, short-sighted—seemed to search inwardly for a moment before he answered :

“There was a family of that name in the Quercy ; so late, I think, as 1650. I had supposed it to be extinct. It bore arms counterpaly argent and gules, a canton ermine——”

“My brother, sir,” the Commandant interrupted, “is a famous genealogist. Do you accept this coat-of-arms he assigns to you?”

“If M. le Commandant will excuse me——”

“Eh, eh?—an awkward question, no doubt, to put to many a young man of family now serving with the colours?” The Commandant chuckled knowingly. “But I have an eye, sir, for nice shades, and an ear too. *Verbum sapienti satis*. A sergeant, they tell me—and of the Béarnais ; but until we have cured you, sir, and the active list again claims you, you are Monsieur à Clive and my guest. We shall talk, so, upon an easier footing. Tut-tut ! I have eyes in my head, I repeat. And this Indian of yours—how does he call himself?”

“Menehwehna, monsieur. He is an Ojibway.”

“And you and he have come by way of the Wilderness? Now what puzzles me——”

“Papa !” interposed the girl gently, laying a hand on her father’s sleeve ; “ought we not to get him ashore before troubling

him with all these questions? He is suffering, I think."

"You say well, my child. A thousand pardons, sir. Here, Bédard! Jérémie!"

But it was Menehwehna who, with inscrutable face, helped John ashore, suffering the others only to hold the canoe steady. John tried hard to collect his thoughts to face this new situation. He had dreamed of falling among savages in these backwoods; but he had fallen among folk gentle in manner and speech, anxious to show him courtesy; folk to whom (as in an instant he divined) truth and uprightness were dearer than life and judged as delicately as by his own family at home in Devonshire. How came they here? Who was this girl whose eyes he avoided lest they should weigh him, as a sister's might, in the scales of honour?

A man may go through life cherishing many beliefs which are internecine foes; unaware of their discordance, or honestly persuaded that within him the lion and the lamb are lying down together, whereas in truth his fate has never drawn the bolts of their separate cages. John had his doubts concerning God; but something deeper than reason within him detested a lie. Yet as a soldier he had accepted without examination the belief that many actions vile in peace

are in war permissible, even obligatory ; a loose belief, the limits of which no man in his regiment—perhaps no man in the two armies—could have defined. In war you may kill ; nay, you must ; but you must do it by code, and with many exceptions and restrictions as to the how and when. In war (John supposed) you may lie ; nay, again, in certain circumstances you must.

With this girl's eyes upon him, worshipping him for a hero, John discovered suddenly that here and now he could not. For an instant, as if along a beam of light, he looked straight into Militarism's sham and ugly heart.

Yes, he saw it quite clearly, and was resolved to end the lie. But for the moment, in his bodily weakness, his will lagged behind his brain. As a sick man tries to lift a hand and cannot, so he sought to rally his will to meet the crisis and was dismayed to find it benumbed and half asleep.

They were ascending the slope, and still as they went the Commandant's voice was questioning him.

"Through the Wilderness ! That was no small exploit, my friend, and it puzzles me how you came to attempt it ; for you were severely wounded, were you not ?"

"I received two wounds at Fort Carillon,

monsieur. The proposal to make across the woods was not mine. It came from the French sergeant in command of our boat."

"So—so. I ought to have guessed it. You were a whole boat's party then, at starting?" John felt the crisis near; but the Commandant's mind was discursive, and he paused to wave a proprietary hand towards the walls and towers of his fortress. "A snug little shelter for the backwoods—eh, M. à Clive? I am, you must know, a student of the art of fortification; *c'est ma rengaine*, as my daughter will tell you, and I shall have much to ask concerning that famous outwork of M. de Montcalm's, which touches my curiosity. So far as Damase could tell me, Fort Carillon itself was never even in danger——" But here Mademoiselle Diane again touched his sleeve. "Yes, yes, to be sure, we will not weary our friend just now. We will cure him first; and while he is mending, you shall look out a new uniform from the stores and set your needle to work to render it as like as you can contrive to the Béarnais. Nay, sir, to her enthusiasm that will be but a trifle. Remember that you come to us crowned with laurels, and with news for which we welcome you as though you brought a message from the General himself." A sudden thought fetched the

Commandant to a standstill. "You are sure that the sergeant, your comrade, carried no message?"

John paused with Menchwehna's arm supporting him.

"If he carried a message, monsieur, he told me of none."

Where were his faculties? Why were they hanging back and refusing to come to grips with the crisis? Why did this twilit riverside persist in seeming unreal to him, and the actors, himself included, as figures moving in a shadow-play?

Once, in a dream, he had seen himself standing at the wings of a stage—an actor, dressed for his part. The theatre was crowded; some one had begun to ring a bell for the curtain to go up; and he, the hero of the piece, knew not one word of his part, could not even remember the name of the play or what it was about. The dream had been extraordinarily vivid, and he had awakened in a sweat.

"But," the Commandant urged, "he must have had some reason for striking through the forest. What was his name?"

"Barboux."

John, as he answered, could not see Menchwehna's face; but Menchwehna's supporting arm did not flinch.

“Was he, too, of the regiment of Béarn?”

“He was of the Béarnais, monsieur.”

“Tell us now. When the Iroquois overtook you, could he have passed on a message, had he carried one?”

While John hesitated, Menehwehna answered him. “It was I only who saw the sergeant die,” said Menehwehna quietly. “He gave me no message.”

“You were close to him?”

“Very close.”

“It is curious,” mused the Commandant, and turned to John again. “Your falling in with the Iroquois, monsieur, gives me some anxiety; since it happens that a party from here and from Fort Frontenac was crossing the Wilderness at about the same time, with messages for the General on Lake Champlain. You saw nothing of them?”

Again Menehwehna took up the answer. “We met no one but these Iroquois,” he said smoothly.

And as Menehwehna spoke the words John felt that everyone in the group about him had been listening for it with a common tension of anxiety. He gazed around, bewildered for the moment by the lie. The girl stood with clasped hands. “Thank God!” he heard the Commandant say, lifting his hat.

What new mystery was here? Menehwehna stood with a face immobile and inscrutable; and John's soul rose up against him in rage and loathing. The man had dishonoured him, counting on his gratitude to endorse the lie. Well, he was quit of gratitude now. "To-morrow, my fine fellow," said he to himself, clenching his teeth, "the whole tale shall be told; between this and the telling you may save your skin, if you can"; and so he turned to the Commandant.

"Monsieur," he said with a meaning glance at Menehwehna, "I beg you to accept no part of our story until I have told it through to you."

The Commandant was plainly puzzled. "Willingly, monsieur; but I beg you to consider the sufferings of our curiosity and be kind in putting a term to them."

"To-morrow——" began John, and looking up, came to a pause. Dominique Guyon had followed them up from the boat and was thrusting himself unceremoniously upon the Commandant's attention.

"Since this monsieur mentions to-morrow," interrupted Dominique abruptly, "and before I am dismissed to supper, may I claim the Seigneur's leave to depart early to-morrow morning?"

The interruption was so unmannerly that John stared from one to another of the group. The Commandant's face had grown very red indeed. Dominique himself seemed sullenly aware of his rudeness. But John's eyes came to rest on Mademoiselle Diane s ; on her eyes for an instant, and then on her lashes, as she bent her gaze on the ground—it seemed to him, purposely, and to avoid Dominique's.

“Dominique,” said the Commandant haughtily, “you forget yourself. You intrude upon my conversation with this gentleman.” His voice shook and yet it struck John that his anger covered some anxiety.

“Monseigneur must forgive me,” answered Dominique, still with an awkward sullenness. “But it is merely my dismissal that I beg. I wish to return early to-morrow to Boisveyrac ; the harvest there is gathered, to be sure, but no one can be trusted to finish the stacks. With so many dancing attendance on the military, the Seignioriness suffers ; and, by your leave, I am responsible for it.”

He glared upon John, who gazed back honestly puzzled. The Commandant seemed on the verge of an explosion, but checked himself.

“My excellent Dominique Guyon,” said he, “uses the freedom of an old tenant. But

here we are at the gate. I bid you welcome, Monsieur à Clive, to my small fortress! Tut, tut, Dominique! We will talk of business in the morning."

Alone with Menehwehna in the bare hospital ward to which old Jérémie as *maréchal des logis* escorted them, John turned on the Ojibway and let loose his indignation.

"And look you," he wound up, "this shall be the end. At daybreak to-morrow the gate of the fort will be opened. Take the canoe and make what speed you can. I will give you until ten o'clock, but at that hour I promise you to tell my tale to the Commandant, and to tell him all."

"If my brother is resolved," said Menehwehna composedly, "let him waste no words. What is settled is settled, and to be angry will do his head no good."

He composed himself to sleep on the floor at the foot of John's bed, pulling his rug up to his ears. There were six empty beds in the ward, and one had been prepared for him; but Menehwehna despised beds.

John awoke to sunlight. It poured in through three windows high in the white-washed wall opposite, and his first thought was to turn over and look for Menehwehna.

Menehwehna had disappeared.

John lay back on the pillow and stared up at the ceiling. Menehwehna had gone ; he was free of him, and this day was to deliver his soul. In an hour or so he would be sitting under lock and key, but with a conscience bathed and refreshed, a companion to be looked in the face, a clear-eyed counsellor. The morning sunlight filled the room with a clean cheerfulness, and he seemed to drink it in through his pores. Forgetting his wound, he jumped out of bed with a laugh.

As he did so his eye travelled along the empty beds in the ward, and along a row of pegs above them, and stiffened suddenly.

There were twelve pegs, and all were bare save one—the one in the wall-space separating his bed from the bed which had been prepared for Menehwehna ; and from this peg hung Sergeant Barboux's white tunic.

It had not been hanging there last night when he dropped asleep : to that he could take his oath. He had supposed it to be left behind in the *armoire* at Boisveyrac. For a full minute he sat on the bed's edge gazing at it in sheer dismay, its evil menace closing like a grip upon his heart.

But by-and-by the grip relaxed as dismay gave room to rage, and with rage came courage.

He laughed again fiercely. Up to this moment he had always shrunk from touch of the thing ; but now he pulled it from its peg, held it at arm's length for a moment, and flung it contemptuously on the floor.

“You, at least, I am not going to fear any longer ! ”

As he cast it from him something crackled under his fingers. For a second or two he stood over the tunic, eyeing it between old disgust and new surmise. Then, dropping on one knee, he fumbled it over, found the inner breast-pocket, and pulled from it a paper.

It was of many sheets, folded in a blue wrapper, sealed with a large red seal, and addressed in cipher.

Turning it over in his hand, he caught sight, in the lower left-hand corner, of a dark spot which his thumb had covered. He stared at it ; then at his thumb, to the ball of which some red dust adhered ; then at the seal. The wax bore the impress of a flying Mercury, with cap, caduceus and winged sandals. The ciphered address he could not interpret ; it was brief, written in two lines, in a bold clear hand.

This, then, was the missive which Barboux had carried.

Had Menehwehna discovered it and placed

it here for him to discover? Yes, undoubtedly. And this was a French despatch; and at any cost he must intercept it! His soldier's sacrament required no less. He must conceal it—seek his opportunity to escape with it—go on lying meanwhile in hope of an opportunity.

Where now was the prospect of his soul's deliverance?

He crept back to bed and was thrusting the letter under his pillow when a slight sound drew his eyes towards the door.

In the doorway stood Menehwehna with a breakfast-tray. The Indian's eyes travelled calmly across the room as he entered and set the tray down on the bed next to John's. Without speaking he picked up the tumbled tunic from the floor and set it back on its peg.

XIV

AGAIN THE WHITE TUNIC

“**B**UT touching this polygon of M. de Montcalm’s——”

Within the curtain-wall facing the water-side the ground had been terraced up to form a high platform or *terre-plein*, whence six guns, mounted in embrasures, commanded the river. Hither John had crept, with the support of a stick, to enjoy the sunshine and the view, and here the Commandant had found him and held him in talk, walking him to and fro, with pauses now and again beside a gun for a few minutes’ rest.

“But touching this polygon of M. de Montcalm’s, he would doubtless follow Courmontaigne rather than Vauban. The angles, you say, were boldly advanced?”

“So they appeared to me, monsieur; but you understand that I took no part——”

“By advancing the angles boldly”——here the Commandant pressed his finger-tips together by way of illustration——“we allow so

much more play to enfilading fire. I speak only of defence against direct assault ; for of opposing such a structure to artillery the General could have had no thought."

"Half-a-dozen six-pounders, well directed, could have knocked it about his ears in as many minutes."

"That does not detract from his credit. Every general fights with two heads—his own and his adversary's ; and, for the rest, we have to do what we can do with our material." The Commandant halted and gazed down whimsically upon the courtyard, in the middle of which his twenty-five militiamen were being drilled by M. Etienne and Sergeant Bédard. "My whole garrison, sir ! Eh ? you seem incredulous. My whole garrison, I give you my word ! Five-and-twenty militiamen to defend a post of this importance ; and up at Fort Frontenac, the very key of the West, my old friend Payan de Noyan has but a hundred in command ! I do not understand it, sir. Stores we have in abundance, and ammunition and valuable presents to propitiate the Indians who no longer exist in this neighbourhood. Yes, and—would you believe it ?—no longer than three months ago the Governor sent up a boatload of women. It appeared that his Majesty had forwarded them all the way

from France, for wives for his faithful soldiers. I packed them off, sir, and returned them to M. de Vaudreuil. 'With all submission to his Majesty's fatherly wisdom,' I wrote, 'the requirements of New France at this moment are best determined by sterner considerations'; and I asked for fifty regulars to man our defences. M. de Vaudreuil replied by sending me up one man, and *he* had but one arm! I made Noyan a present of him; his notions of fortification were rudimentary, not to say puerile."

The Commandant paused and dug the surface of the *terre-plein* indignantly with his heel. "As for fortification, do I not know already what additional defences we need? Fort Amitié, monsieur, was constructed by the great Frontenac himself, and with wonderful sagacity, if we consider the times. Take, for example, the towers. You are acquainted, of course, with the modern rule of giving the bastions a salient angle of fifteen degrees in excess of half the angle of the figure in all figures from the square up to the dodecagon? Well, Fort Amitié being a square—or rather a right-angled quadrilateral—the half of its angle will be forty-five degrees; add fifteen, and we get sixty; which is as nearly as possible the salience of our flanking towers; only they happen to be

round. So far, so good; but Frontenac had naturally no opportunity of studying Vauban's masterpieces, and perhaps as the older man he never digested Vauban's theories. He did not see that a quadrilateral measuring fifty toises by thirty must need some protection midway in its longer curtains, and more especially on the river-side. A ravelin is out of the question, for we have no counter-scarp to stand it on—no ditch at all in fact; our glacis slopes straight from the curtain to the river. I have thought of a tenaille—of a flat bastion. We could do so much if only M. de Vaudreuil would send us men!—but, as it is, on what are we relying? Simply, M. à Clive, on our enemies' ignorance of our weakness."

John turned his face away and stared out over the river. The walls of the fort seemed to stifle him; but in truth his own breast was the prison.

"Well now," the Commandant pursued, "your arrival has set me thinking. We cannot strengthen ourselves against artillery; but they say that these English generals learn nothing. They may come against us with musketry, and what served Fort Carillon may also serve Fort Amitié. A breastwork—call it a lunette—half-way down the slope yonder, so placed as to command the landing-

place at close musket range—it might be useful, eh? There will be trouble with Polyphile Cartier—‘Sans Quartier,’ as they call him. He is proud of his cabbages, and we might have to evict them; yes, certainly our lunette would impinge upon his cabbages. But the safety of the Fort would, of course, override all such considerations.”

He caught John by the arm and hurried him along for a better view of Sans Quartier’s cabbage-patch. And just then Mademoiselle Diane came walking swiftly towards them from the end of the *terre-plein* by the flag-staff tower. An instant later the head and shoulders of Dominique Guyon appeared above the ascent.

Clearly he was following her; and as she drew near John read, or thought he read, a deep trouble in the child’s eyes. But from her eyes his glance fell upon a bundle that she carried, and his own cheek paled. For the bundle was a white tunic, and it took a second glance to assure him that the tunic was a new one and not Sergeant Barboux’s!

“Eh? What did I tell you? She has been rifling the stores already!” Here the Commandant caught sight of Dominique and hailed him. “Holà, Dominique!”

Dominique halted for a moment and then came slowly forward; while the girl, having

greeted John with a grown woman's dignity, stood close by her father's elbow.

"Dominique, how many men can you spare me from Boisveyrac, now that the harvest is over?"

"For what purpose do you wish men, Monseigneur?"

"Eh? That is my affair, I hope."

The young man's face darkened, but he controlled himself to say humbly, "Monseigneur rebukes me with justice. I should not have spoken so; but it was in alarm for his interests."

"You mean that you are unwilling to spare me a single man? Come, come, my friend—the harvest is gathered; and, apart from that, my interests are the King's. Positively you must spare me half a dozen for his Majesty's *corvée*."

"The harvest is gathered, to be sure; but no one at Boisveyrac can be trusted to finish the stacks. They are a good-for-nothing lot; and now Damase, the best thatcher among them, has, I hear, been sent up to Fort Frontenac along with 'Polyte Latulippe."

"By my orders."

Dominique bent his eyes on the ground.

"Monseigneur's orders shall be obeyed. May I have his permission to return at once

to Boisveyrac?—at least, as soon as we have discussed certain matters of business?”

“Business? But since it is not convenient just now——” It seemed to John that the old gentleman had suddenly grown uneasy.

“I speak only of certain small repairs ; the matter of Legassé’s holding, for example,” said Dominique tranquilly. “The whole will not detain Monseigneur above ten minutes.”

“Ah, to be sure!” The Commandant’s voice betrayed relief. “Come to my orderly-room, then. You will excuse me, M. à Clive?”

He turned to go, and Dominique stepped aside to allow the girl to accompany her father. But she made no sign. He shot a look at her and sullenly descended the terrace at his seigneur’s heels.

Mademoiselle Diane’s brow grew clear again as the sound of his footsteps died away, and presently she faced John with a smile so gay and frank that (although, quite involuntarily, he had been watching her) the change startled him. There was something in this girl at once innocently candid and curiously elusive ; to begin with, he could not decide whether to think of her as child or woman. Last night her eyes had rested

on him with a child's open wonder, and a minute ago in Dominique's presence she had seemed to shrink close to her father with a child's timidity. Now, gaily as she smiled, her bearing had grown dignified and self-possessed.

"You are not to leave me, please, M. à Clive—seeing that I came expressly to find you."

John lifted his hat with mock gravity. "You do me great honour, mademoiselle. And Dominique?" he added. "Was he also coming in search of me?"

She frowned, and turning towards a cannon in the embrasure behind her, spread the white tunic carefully upon it. "Dominique Guyon is tiresome," she said. "At times, as you have heard, he speaks with too much freedom to my father; but it is the freedom of old service. The Guyons have farmed Boisveyrac for our family since first the Seigniory was built." She seemed about to say more, but checked herself, and stood smoothing an arm of the tunic upon the gun. "Ah, here is Félicité!" she exclaimed, as a stout middle-aged woman came bustling along the terrace towards them. "You have kept me waiting, Félicité. And, good heavens! what is that you carry? Did I not tell you that I would get Jérémie to find

me a tunic from the stores? See, I have one already."

"But this is not from the stores, mademoiselle!" panted Félicité, as she came to a halt. "It appears that monsieur brought his tunic with him—Jérémie told me he had seen it hanging by his bed in the sick ward—and here it is, see you!" She displayed it triumphantly, spreading its skirts to the sunshine. "A trifle soiled! but it will save us all the trouble in the world with the measurements—eh, mademoiselle?"

Diane's eyes were on John's face. For a moment or two she did not answer, but at length said slowly:

"Nevertheless you shall measure monsieur. Have you the tapes? Good: give me one, with the blue chalk, and I will check off your measurements."

She seated herself on the gun-carriage and drew the two tunics on to her lap. John shivered as she touched the dead sergeant's.

Félicité grinned as she advanced with the tape. "Do not be shy of me, monsieur," she encouraged him affably. "You are a hero, and I myself am the mother of eight, which is in its way heroic. There should be a good understanding between us. Raise your arms a little, pray, while I take first of all the measure of your chest."

Her two arms—and they were plump, not to say brawny—went about him. “Thirty-eight,” she announced, after examining the tape. “It’s long since I have embraced one so slight.”

“Thirty-eight,” repeated Mademoiselle Diane, puckering up her lips and beginning to measure off the *pouces* across the breast and back of Sergeant Barboux’s tunic. “Thirty-eight, did you say?”

“Thirty-eight, mademoiselle. We must remember that these brave defenders of ours sometimes pad themselves a little; it will be nothing amiss if you allow for forty. Eh, monsieur?” Félicité laughed up in John’s face. “But you find some difficulty, mademoiselle. Can I help you?”

“I thank you—it is all right,” Diane answered hurriedly.

“Waist, twenty-nine,” Félicité continued. “One might even say twenty-eight, only monsieur is drawing in his breath.”

“Where are the scissors, Félicité?” demanded her mistress, who had carefully smuggled them beneath her skirt as she sat.

“The scissors? Of a certainty now I brought them—but the sight of that heathen Ojibway, when he gave me the tunic, was enough to make any decent woman faint!

I shook like an aspen, if you will credit me, all the way across the drill-ground, and perhaps the scissors . . . no, indeed, I cannot find them . . . but if mademoiselle will excuse me while I run back for another pair. . . .” She bustled off towards the Commandant’s quarters.

Mademoiselle Diane reached down a hand to the tunic which had fallen at her feet, and drew it on to her lap again, as if to examine it. But her eyes were searching John’s face.

“Why do you shiver?” she asked.

“I beg of you not to touch it, mademoiselle. It—it hurts to see you touching it.”

“Did you kill him?”

“Of whom is mademoiselle speaking?”

“Pray do not pretend to be stupid, monsieur. I am speaking of that other man—the owner of this tunic—the sergeant who took you into the forest. Did you kill him?”

“He died in fair fight, mademoiselle.”

“It was a duel, then?” He did not answer, and she continued, “I can trust your face, monsieur. I am sure it was only in fair fight. But why should you think me afraid to touch *this*? Oh, why, M. à Clive, will men take it so cruelly for granted that we women are afraid of the thought of blood—

nay, even that we owe it to ourselves to be afraid? If we are what you all insist we should be, what right have we to be born in these times? Think of New France fighting now for dear life—ah! why should I ask *you* to think, who have bled for her? Yet you would have me shudder at the touch of a stained piece of cloth; and while you hold these foolish prejudices, can you wonder that New France has no Jeanne d'Arc? When I was at the Ursulines at Quebec, they used to pray to her and ask for her intercession; but what they taught was needlework."

"The world has altered since her time, mademoiselle," said John, falsely and lamely.

"Has it? It burnt her; even in those days it did its best according to its lights," she answered bitterly. "Only in these days there are no heroines to burn. No heroines . . . no fires . . . and even in our needlework we must be demure, and not touch a garment that has been touched with blood! Monsieur, was this man a coward?" She lifted the tunic.

"He was a vain fellow and a bully, mademoiselle, but by no means a coward."

"He fought for France?"

"Yes; and, I believe, with credit."

"Then, monsieur, because he was a bully, I commend the man who killed him fairly.

And because he was brave and fought for France, I am proud to handle his tunic."

As John à Cleeve gazed at her kindled face, the one thought that rose above his own shame was a thought that her earnestness marvellously made her beautiful.

CHAPTER XV

THE SECOND DESPATCH

DOMINIQUE GUYON departed shortly before noon ; and a week later half a dozen *habitants* arrived from Boisveyrac to work at the entrenchment which the Commandant had already opened across Sans Quartier's cabbage plot. The Commandant himself donned a blouse and dug with the rest ; and M. Etienne ; and even old Jérémie Tripier, though grumbling over his rheumatism almost as bitterly as Sans Quartier over his wasted cabbages. Every one, in fact, toiled, and with a will, at the King's *corvée* : every one, that is, except the women, and John, and Menehwehna (whose Indian dignity revolted against spade-work), and old Father Joly, the chaplain of the fort, who was too infirm.

From him, as they sat together and watched the diggers, John learned much of the fort's history, and something, too, of his hosts' ; for Father Joly delighted in

gossip, and being too deaf to derive much profit from asking questions kept the talk to himself—greatly to John's relief. His gossip, be it said, was entirely innocent. The good man seemed to love every one in his small world, except Father Launoy. And again this exception was fortunate; for on learning that John had been visited and exhorted at Boisveyrac by Father Launoy, Father Joly showed no further concern in his spiritual health. He was perhaps the oldest parochial priest in New France, and since leaving the seminary at Quebec had spent almost all his days at Boisveyrac. He remembered the Seigneur's father (he always called the Commandant "the Seigneur"). "Such a man, monsieur! He stood six feet four inches in his stockings, and could lift and cast a grown bullock with his own hands." John pointed out that the present Seigneur—in his working blouse especially—made a fine figure of a man; but this the old priest could hardly be brought to allow. "A heart of gold, I grant you; but to have seen his father striding among his *censitaires* on St. Martin's Feast! It may be that, having watched the son from childhood, I still think of him as a boy. . . ."

Of Fort Amitié itself Father Joly had

much to tell. It dated from the early days of the great Frontenac, who had planted a settlement here—a collection of wooden huts within a stockade—to be an *entrepôt* of commerce with the Indians of the Upper Lakes. Later it became a favourite haunt of deserters from the army and *coureurs de bois* outlawed by royal edict ; and, strangely enough, these had been the days of its prosperity. Its real decline began when the Governor, toward the end of his rule, replaced the wooden huts with a fortress of stone. The traders, trappers, ne'er-do-wells and Indians deserted the lake-head, which had been a true camp of amity, and moved their rendezvous farther west, leaving the fortress to its Commandant and a sleepy garrison.

From that time until the war the garrison had been composed of regulars, who lived on the easiest terms with their Commandant and his officers, and retired at the age of forty or fifty, when King Louis presented them with a farm and farm stock and provisions for two or three years, and often completed the outfit with a wife.

“A veritable Age of Gold, monsieur ! But war has put an end to it all—war, and the greed of these English, whom God will confound ! The regulars went their ways, leaving only Sergeant Bédard ; who had retired upon

a farm, but was persuaded by the Seigneur to come back and drill the recruits of the militia."

"Who take very kindly to garrison life, so far as I can see."

"Fort Amitié has its amenities, monsieur," said Father Joly, catching John's glance rather than hearing the words. "There are the allotments, to begin with—the fences between them, you may not have observed, are made of stakes from the original palisade; the mould is excellent. The Seigneur, too, offers prizes for vegetable-growing and poultry-raising; he is an unerring judge of poultry, as one has need to be at Boisveyrac, where the rents are mostly paid in fowls. Indeed, yes, the young recruits are well enough content. The Seigneur feeds them well, and they can usually have a holiday for the asking and go a-hunting in the woods or a-fishing in the river. But, for my part, I regret Boisveyrac. A man of my years does not readily bear transplanting. And here is a curious thing, monsieur; deaf though I am, I miss the sound of the rapids. I cannot tell you how; nevertheless it seems to me that something has gone out of my daily life, and the landscape here is still and empty."

"And how," John managed to make him

hear, "did the Seigneur come to command Fort Amitié?"

Father Joly glanced nervously down the slope and lowered his voice. "That was M. Armand's doing, monsieur." Then, seeing that John did not understand, "M. Armand—mademoiselle's brother and the Seigneur's only son. He went to Quebec, when the Governor had given him a post in his household; a small post, but with good prospects for a young man of his birth and address. He had wits, monsieur, and good looks; everything in short but money; and there is no better blood in the province than that of the des Noël-Tilly. They have held Boisveyrac now for five generations, and were Seigneurs of Deuxmanoirs and Préaux-Sources even before that. Well, as I say, the lad started with good prospects; but by-and-by he began to desert the Château St. Louis for the Intendant's Palace. Monsieur has heard of the Intendant Bigot—is perhaps acquainted with him? No? Then I may say without hurting any one's feelings what I would say to the Intendant himself were he here—that he is a corrupter of youth, and a corrupter of the innocence of women, and a corrupter of honest government. If New France lie under the scourge to-day,

it is for the sins of such men as he." The old man's voice shook with sudden anger, but he calmed himself. "In brief, there was a gambling debt—a huge sum owing; and the Seigneur was forced to travel to Quebec and fetch the lad home. How he paid the amount I cannot tell you; belike he raised the money on Boisveyrac, but pay he did. Dominique Guyon went with him to Quebec, having just succeeded his father, old Bonhomme Guyon, as Boisveyrac's man of business; and doubtless Dominique made some arrangements with the merchants there. He has a head on his shoulders, that lad. M. de Vaudreuil, too, taking pity on a distressed gentleman of New France, gave the Seigneur the command of this fort, to grow fat on it, and hither we have all migrated. But our good Seigneur will never grow fat, monsieur; he is of the poor to whom shall belong the Kingdom of God."

John did not clearly understand this, being unacquainted with the official system of speculation by false vouchers—a system under which the command of a backwoods fort was reckoned to be worth a small fortune. His mind recurred to Dominique and to the Commandant's uneasiness at Dominique's mention of business.

"A queer fellow, that Dominique!" he

muttered, half to himself; "and a queer fate that made him the brother of Bateese."

The priest heard, as deaf men sometimes will hear a word or two spoken below ordinary pitch.

"Ah!" said he, shaking his head. "You have heard of Bateese? A sad case—a very sad case!"

"There was an accident, I have heard."

Father Joly glanced at John's face and, reading the question, bent his own dim eyes on the river. John divined at once that the old man knew more than he felt inclined to tell.

"It was at Bord-à-Loup, a little above Boisveyrac, four years ago last St. Peter's tide. The two brothers were driving some timber which the Seigneur had cleared there; the logs had jammed around a rock not far from shore and almost at the foot of the fall. The two had managed to get across and were working the mass loose with handspikes when, just as it began to break up, Bateese slipped and fell between two logs."

"Through some careless push of Dominique's, was it not?"

But Father Joly did not hear, or did not seem to.

"He was hideously broken, poor Bateese. For weeks it did not seem possible that he

could live. The *habitants* find Dominique a queer fellow, even as you do; and I have observed that even Mademoiselle Diane treats him somewhat impatiently. But in truth he is a lad grown old before his time. It is terrible when such a blow falls upon the young. He and Bateese adored one another."

And this was all John learned at the time. But three days later he heard more of the story, and from Mademoiselle Diane.

She was seated in an embrasure of the terrace—the same, in fact, in which she had taken measurements for John's new tunic. She was embroidering it now with the Béarnais badge, and had spread Barboux's tunic on the gun-breach to give her the pattern. John, passing along the terrace in a brown study, while his eyes followed the evolutions of Sergeant Bédard's men at morning parade in the square below, did not catch sight of her until she called to him to come and admire her handiwork.

"Monsieur is *distrain*, it appears," she said, mischievously. "It must be weary work for him, whiling away the hours in this contemptible fortress?"

"I do not find Fort Amitié contemptible, mademoiselle."

She shook her head and laughed. "If

you wish to please me, monsieur, you must find some warmer praise for it. For in some sort it is my ancestral home, and I love every stone of it."

"Mademoiselle speaks in riddles. I had thought that every one of the Commandant's household—except the Commandant himself, perhaps—was pining to get back to Boisveyrac."

She let her needlework lie for a moment, and sat with her eyes resting on the façade of the Commandant's quarters across the square.

"It is foolish in me," she said musingly; "for in the days of which I am thinking not one of these stones was laid. You must know, monsieur, that in those days many and many a young man of family took to the woods; no laws, no edicts would restrain them; the life of the forest seemed to pass into their blood and they could not help themselves . . . ah, I myself understand that, sometimes!" she added, after a pause.

"Well, monsieur," she went on, "there came to Fort Amitié a certain young Raoul de Tilly, who suffered from this wandering fever. The Government outlawed him in the end; but as yet his family had hopes to reclaim him, and, being powerful in New France, they managed to get his sentence

delayed. He came here, and here he fell in love with an Indian girl, and married her—putting, they say, a pistol at the priest's head. The girl was a Wyandot from Lake Huron, and had been baptized but a week before. For a year they lived together in the Fort here; but when a child was born the husband sent her down the river to his father's Seigniory below Three Rivers, and himself wandered westward into the Lakes, and was never again heard of. The mother died on the voyage, it is said; but the child—a daughter—reached the Seigniory and was acknowledged, and lived to marry a cousin, a de Tilly of Roc-Sainte Anne. My mother was her grand-daughter."

Why had she chosen to tell him this story? He turned to her in some wonder. But, for whatever reason she had told it, the truth of the story was written in her face. Hardly could he recognise the Mademoiselle Diane who had declaimed to him of Joan of Arc and the glory of fighting for New France. She was gone, and in her place a girl fronted him, a child almost, with a strange anguish in her voice, and in her eyes the look of a wild creature trapped. She was appealing to him. But again, why?

"I think you must be in some trouble, mademoiselle," said he, speaking the thought

that came uppermost. Something prompted him to add, "Has it to do with Dominique Guyon?" The question seemed to stab her. She stood up trembling, with a scared face.

"Why should you think I am troubled? What made you suppose——" she stammered, and stopped again in confusion. "I only wanted you to understand. Is it not much better when folks speak to one another frankly? Something may be hidden which seems of no importance, and yet for lack of knowing it we may misjudge utterly, may we not?"

Heaven knew that of late John had been feeling sorely enough the torment of carrying about a secret. But to the girl's broken utterances he held no clue at all, nor could he hit on one.

"See now," she went on, almost fiercely; "you speak of Dominique Guyon. You suspected something—what, you could not tell; perhaps it had not even come to be a suspicion. But, seeing me troubled—as you think—at once Dominique's name comes to your lips. Now listen to the truth, how simple it is. When Armand and I were children . . . you have heard of Armand?"

"A little; from Father Joly."

"Papa thinks he has behaved dishonourably, and will scarcely allow his name to be

uttered until he shall return from the army, having redeemed his fault. Papa, though he seems easy, can be very stern on all questions of honour. Well, when Armand and I were children, we played with the two Guyon boys. Their father, Bonhomme Guyon, was only my father's farmer; but in a lonely place like Boisveyrac, and with no one to instruct us in difference of rank and birth—for my mother died when I was a baby——”

“I understand, mademoiselle.”

“And so we played about the farm, as children will. But by-and-by, and a short while before I left Boisveyrac to go to school with the Ursulines, Dominique began to be—what shall I say? He was very tiresome.”

She paused. “I understand,” repeated John quietly.

“At first I did not guess what he meant. And the others, of course, did not guess. But he was furiously jealous, even of his brother, poor Bateese. And when Bateese met with his accident——”

“One moment, mademoiselle. When Bateese fell between the logs, was it because Dominique had pushed him?”

She wrung her hands as in a sudden fright. “You guessed that? How did you guess? No one knows it but I, and Father Launoy,

no doubt, and perhaps Father Joly. But Dominique knows that *I* know; and his misery seems to give him some hold over me."

"In what way can I help you, mademoiselle?"

"Did I ask you to help me?" She had resumed her seat on the gun-carriage and, drawing Sergeant Barboux's tunic off its gun, began with her embroidery scissors to snip at the shanks of its breast-buttons. His cheeks were burning now; she spoke with a strained accent of levity. "I called you, monsieur, to say that I cannot, of course, copy these buttons, and to ask if you consent to my using them on your new tunic, or if you prefer to put up with plain ones. But it appears that I have wandered to some distance from my question." She attempted a laugh; which, however, failed dolefully.

"Decidedly I prefer any buttons to those. But, excuse me," persisted John, drawing nearer, "though you asked for no help and need none, yet I will not believe you have honoured me so far with your confidence and all without purpose."

"Oh," she replied, still in the same tone of hard, almost contemptuous, levity. "I had a whim, monsieur, to be understood by you, that is all; and perhaps to rebuke you

by contrast for telling us so little of yourself. It is as Félicité said—you messieurs of the army keep yourselves well padded over the heart. See here——” She began to dig with her scissor-point and lay bare the quilting within Barboux’s tunic ; but presently stopped, with a sharp cry.

“What is the matter, mademoiselle ?”

For a second or two she snipped furiously, and then—“This is the matter !” she cried, plunging her fingers within the lining. “A despatch ! He carried one after all !” She dragged forth a paper and held it up in triumph.

“Give it to me, please. But I say that you must and shall, mademoiselle !” John’s head swam, but he stepped and caught her by the wrists.

And with that the paper fell to the ground. He held her wrist ; he felt only the magnetic touch, looked into her eyes, and understood. From wonder at his outburst they passed to fear, to appeal, to love. Yes, they shrank from him, sick with shame and self-comprehension, pitifully seeking to hide the wound. But it would not by any means be hid. A light flowed from it, blinding him.

“You hurt ! Oh, you hurt !”

He dropped her hands and strode away, leaving the paper at her feet.

CHAPTER XVI

THE DISMISSAL

THE Commandant tapped the despatch on the table before him, with a *rusé* smile.

"I was right then, after all, M. à Clive, in maintaining that your comrade carried a message from the General. My daughter has told me how you came, between you, to discover it. That you should have preserved the tunic is no less than providential ; indeed, I had all along supposed it to be your own."

John waited, with a glance at the document, which lay with the seal downward, seemingly intact.

"It is addressed," the Commandant pursued, "in our ordinary cypher to the Marquis de Vaudreuil at Montreal. In my own mind I have not the least doubt that it instructs him—the pressure to the south having been relieved by the victory at Fort Carillon—to send troops up to us and to M. de Noyan at Fort Frontenac. My good friend up there

has been sending down appeals for reinforcements at the rate of two a week, and has only ceased of late in stark despair. It is evident that your comrade carried a message of some importance to Montreal ; and I have sent for you, monsieur, to ask : Are you in a condition to travel ? ”

“ You wish me to carry this despatch, monsieur ? ”

“ If you tell me that you are fit to travel. Indeed it is a privilege which you have a right to claim, and M. de Vaudreuil will doubtless find some reward for the bearer. Young men were ambitious in my day—eh, M. à Clive ? ”

John, averting his face, gazed out of window upon the empty courtyard, the slope of the terrace and the line of embrasures above it. Diane was not there beside her accustomed gun, and he wondered if he should see her again before departing. He wondered if he desired to see her. To be sure he must accept this mission, having gone so far in deceit. It would set him free from Fort Amitié ; and, once free, he could devise with Menchwehna some plan of escaping southward. Within the fort he could devise nothing. He winced under the Commandant's kindness ; yet blessed it for offering, now at last, a term to his humiliation.

“M. de Vaudreuil will not be slow, I feel sure, to recognise your services,” pursued the Commandant genially. “But, that there may be no mistake about it, I have done myself the pleasure to write him a letter commending you. Would you care to hear a sentence or two? No?”—for John’s hand went up in protest—“Well, youth is never the worse for a touch of modesty. Be so good, then, monsieur, as to pass me the seal yonder.”

John picked up and handed the seal almost without glancing at it. His thoughts were elsewhere as the Commandant lit a taper, heated the wax, and let it drop upon the letter. But just as the seal was impressed, old Jérémie Tripier entered without knocking, and in a state of high perturbation. “Monseigneur! Monseigneur! A whole fleet of boats in sight—coming down the river!”

The Commandant pushed back his chair.

“Boats? Down the river? Nonsense, Jérémie, it is up the river you mean; you have the message wrong. They must be the relief from Montreal!”

“Nay, Monseigneur, it is down the river they are approaching. The news came in from Sans Quartier, who is on sentry-go upstream. He has seen them from Mont-aux-

Ours, and reports them no more than three miles away."

"Please God no ill has befallen de Noyan!" muttered the Commandant. "Excuse me, M. à Clive; I must look into this. We will talk of our business later."

But John scarcely heard. His eyes had fallen on the seal of the Commandant's letter. It stared back at him—a facsimile of the one hidden in his pocket—a flying Mercury, with cap, winged sandals, and caduceus.

He pulled his wits together to answer the Commandant politely, he scarcely knew how, and followed him out to the postern gate. Half a dozen of the garrison—all, in fact, who happened to be off duty—were hurrying along the ridge to verify Sans Quartier's news. John, still weak from his wound, could not maintain the pace. Halting on the slope for breath, while the Commandant with an apology left him and strode ahead, he turned, caught sight of Diane, and waited for her.

She came as one who cannot help herself, with panting bosom and eyes that supplicated him for mercy. But Love, not John à Cleeve, was the master to grant her remission—and who can supplicate Love?

They met without greeting, and for a while walked on in silence, he with a flame

in his veins and a weight of lead in his breast.

"Is papa sending you to Montreal?" she asked, scarcely above a whisper.

"He was giving me my orders when this news came."

There was a long pause now, and when next she spoke he could hardly catch her words. "You will come again?"

His heart answered, "My love! O my love!" But he could not speak it. He looked around upon sky, forest, sweeping river—all the landscape of his bliss, the prison of his intolerable shame. A fierce peremptory longing seized him to kill his bliss and his shame at one stroke. Four words would do it. He had but to stand up and cry aloud, "I am an Englishman!" and the whole beautiful hideous dream would crack, shiver, dissolve. Only four words! Almost he heard his voice shouting them and saw through the trembling heat her body droop under the stab, her love take the mortal hurt and die with a face of scorn. Only four words, and an end desirable as death! What kept him silent then? He checked himself on the edge of a horrible laugh. The thing was called Honour: and its service steeped him in dishonour to the soul.

“You will come again?” her eyes repeated.

He commanded himself to say, “It may be that there is now no need to go. If Fort Frontenac has fallen——”

“Why should you believe that Fort Frontenac has fallen?” she broke in; and then, clasping her hands, added in a sort of terror, “Do you know that—that now—I hardly seem able to think about Fort Frontenac, or to care whether it has fallen or not? What wickedness has come to me that I should be so cruelly selfish?”

He set his face. Even to comfort her he must not let his look or voice soften; one touch of weakness now would send him over the abyss.

“Let us go forward,” said he. “At the next bend we shall know what has happened.”

But around the bend came a procession which told plainly enough what had happened; a procession of boats filled with dark-coated provincial soldiers, a few white-coats, many women and children. No flags flew astern; the very lift of the oars told of disgrace and humiliation. Thus came Payan de Noyan with his garrison, prisoners on *parole*, sent down by the victorious British to report the fall of Frontenac and be exchanged for prisoners taken at Ticonderoga.

Already the Commandant and his men

had surmised the truth, and were hurrying back along the ridge to meet the unhappy procession at the quay. John and Diane turned with them and walked homeward in silence.

The flotilla passed slowly beneath their eyes, but did not head in toward the quay. An old man in the leading boat waved an arm from mid-stream—or rather, lifted it in salutation and let it fall again dejectedly.

This was de Noyan himself, and apparently his *parole* forbade him to hold converse with his countrymen before reaching Montreal. On them next, for aught the garrison of Fort Amitié could learn, the enemy were even now descending.

Diane, halting on the slope, heard her father call across the water to de Noyan, who turned, but shook his head and waved a hand once more with a gesture of refusal.

“He was asking him to carry the despatch to Montreal. Since he will not, or cannot, you must follow with it.”

“For form’s sake,” John agreed. “It can have no other purpose now.”

They were standing at the verge of the forest, and she half turned towards him with a little choking cry that asked, as plainly as words, “Is this all you have to say? Are you blind, that you cannot see how I suffer?”

He stepped back a pace into the shadow of the trees. She lifted her head and, as their eyes met, drooped it again, faint with love. He stretched out his arms.

“Diane!”

But as she ran to him he caught her by the shoulders and held her at arms' length. Her eyes, seeking his, saw that his gaze travelled past her and down the slope. And turning in his grasp she saw Menchwehna running towards them across the clearing from the postern gate, and crouching as he ran.

He must have seen them; for he came straight to where they stood, and gripping John by the arm pointed towards the quay, visible beyond the edge of the flagstaff tower.

“Who are these newcomers?” cried Diane, recovering herself. “Why, yes, it is Father Launoy and Dominique Guyon! Yes, yes—and Bateese!—whom you have never seen.”

John turned to her quietly, without haste.

“Mademoiselle,” said he in a voice low and firm, and not altogether unhappy, “I have met Bateese Guyon before now. And these men bring death to me. Run, Menchwehna! For me, I return to the Fort with mademoiselle.”

She stared at him. “Death?” she echoed, wondering.

"Death," he repeated, "and I deserve it. On many accounts I have deserved it, but most of all for having stolen your trust. I am an Englishman."

For a moment she did not seem to hear. Then slowly, very slowly, she put out both hands and cowered from him.

"Return, Menehwehna!" commanded John firmly. "Yes, mademoiselle, I cannot expiate what I have done. But I go to expiate what I can."

He took a step forward; but she had straightened herself up and stood barring his path with her arm, fronting him with terrible scorn.

"Expiate! What can you expiate? You can only die; and are you so much afraid of death that you think it an atonement? You can only die, and—and—" she hid her face in her hands. "Oh, Menehwehna, help me! He can only die, and I cannot let him die!"

Menehwehna stepped forward with impassive face. "If my brother goes down the hill, I go with him," he announced calmly.

"You see?" Diane turned on John wildly. "You will only kill your friend—and to what purpose? The wrong you have done you cannot remedy; the remedy you seek would kill me surely. Ah, go! go! Do not force me to kneel and clasp your knees—you that

have already brought me so low! Go, and let me learn to hate as well as scorn you. You wish to expiate? This only will I take for expiation."

"Come, brother!" urged Menehwehna, taking him by the arm.

Diane bent close to the Indian, whispered a word in his ear, and, turning about, looked John in the face.

"Are you sorry at all? If you are sorry, you will obey me now."

With one long searching look she left him and walked down the slope. Menehwehna dragged him back into the undergrowth as the postern door opened, and M. Etienne came through it, followed by Father Launoy, Dominique, and Bateese.

Peering over the bushes Menehwehna saw Diane descend to meet them—he could not see with what face.

Marvellous is woman. She met them with a gay and innocent smile.

Her whispered word to Menehwehna had been to keep by the waterside. And late that night, when the garrison had given over beating the woods for the fugitives, a canoe stole up the river, close under the north bank. One man sat in it; and after paddling for a couple of miles up-stream he began to

sing as he went—softly at first, but raising his voice by little and little—

Chante, rossignol, chante,
Toi qui as le cœur gai ;
Tu as le cœur à rire,
Moi je l'ai-t à pleurer.

No answer came from the dark forest. He took up his chant again, more boldly :

Tu as le cœur à rire,
Moi je l'ai-t à pleurer ;
J'ai perdu ma maîtresse
Sans pouvoir la trouver.
—Lui y a longtemps que je t'aime,
Jamais je ne t'oublierai.

He listened. A low call sounded from the trees on his right, and he brought the canoe under the bank.

“Is that you, Bateese?”

“Monsieur, forgive me ! I said as little as I could, but the Reverend Father and Dominique were too clever for me. And how was I to have known? Take the canoe and travel fast, my friends ; they will be searching again at dawn.”

“Did mademoiselle send the canoe?”

“Yes ; and she charged you to answer one question. It was her brother—M. Armand—whom the Iroquois slew in the Wilderness. Ah, that cry ! Can one ever forget?”

“Her brother!” John’s hand went to his breast in the darkness.

“Monsieur did not know then? I was sure that monsieur could not have known! For myself I did not know until four days ago. The Iroquois had not seen us, and we escaped back to the Richelieu—to Sorel—to Montreal, where I left my wounded man. Ah, monsieur, but we suffered on the way! And from Montreal I made for Boisveyrac, and there my tongue ran loose—but in all innocence. And there I heard that M. Armand had been crossing the Wilderness . . . but monsieur did not know it was her brother?”

“That, at least, I never knew nor guessed, Bateese. Was this the question Mademoiselle Diane desired you to ask me?”

“It was, monsieur. And, according to your answer, I was to give you her word.”

“What is her word, Bateese?”

“She commends you to God, monsieur, and will pray for you.”

“Take back my word that I will pray to deserve her prayers, who can never deserve her pardon.”

CHAPTER XVII

FRONTENAC SHORE

“AND what will my brother do?”

For minutes before John heard and answered it the question had been singing in his ears to the beat of the paddles. He supposed that Menehwehna had asked it but a moment ago.

“I cannot tell. Let us press on; it may be we shall find my countrymen at Frontenac.”

“As a child breaks down a lodge which another child has built, and runs away, so your countrymen will have departed.”

Fort Amitié lay far behind. They were threading their way now among the Thousand Isles, and soon Lake Ontario opened before them, spreading its blue waters to the horizon. But John heeded neither green islands nor blue lake, nor their beauty, nor their peace, but only the shame in his heart. He saw only the dazzle on the water, heard only the swirl around his paddle, stroke by

stroke, hour after hour ; prayed only for fatigue to drug the ache and bring about oblivion with the night.

Coasting the shore they came at the close of day upon the charred skeletons of three ships lifting their ribs out of the shallows against the sunset, and beyond these, where the water deepened, to a deserted quay.

They landed ; and while they climbed the slope towards the fort, out of one of its breaches its only inhabitant crawled to them—a young dog, gaunt and tame with hunger.

The dog fawned upon Menehwehna. But John turned his back on the smoke-blackened walls in a sick despair, seated himself on the slope, and let his gaze travel southward over the shoreless water. Beyond the rim of it would lie Oswego, ruined by the French as the English had ruined Frontenac.

The dog came and stretched itself at his feet, staring up with eyes that seemed at once to entreat his favour and to marvel why he sat there motionless. Menehwehna had stepped down to the canoe to fetch food for it, and by-and-by returned with a handful of biscuit.

“He will be useful yet,” said Menehwehna, seating himself beside the dog and feeding it carefully with very small pieces.

"He cannot be more than a year old, and before the winter is ended we will make a hunter of him."

John did not answer.

"You will come with me now, brother?" Still Menehwehna kept his eyes on the dog. "There is no other way."

"There is one way only," answered John, with his eyes fastened on the south. "Teach me to build a canoe, and let me cross the water alone. If I drown, I drown."

"And if you reached? Your countrymen are all gathering back to the south; until the snow has come and passed, there will be no more fighting. You are better with me. Come, and when the corn begins to shoot again you shall tell me if you are minded to return."

"Menehwehna, you do not understand."

"I have studied you, my brother, when you have not guessed it; and I say to you that if you went back now to your people it would be nothing to their gain, nor to yours, for the desire of fighting has gone out of you. Now in my nation we do not wonder when a man loses that desire, for we put it away as men by eating put away the desire of food. All things come to us in their season. This month the corn ripens, and at home my wife and children are gathering it; but anon

comes the Moon of Travel, and they will weary of the village and watch the lake for me to arrive and lead them away to the hunting-grounds. So the beasts have their seasons ; the buck his month for belling, and the beaver his month for taking shelter in his house which he has stored. And with us, when the snow melts, it may happen that the war-talk begins—none knowing how—and spreads through the villages : first the young men take to dancing and painting their faces, and the elder men catch fire, and a day sees us taking leave of our womankind to follow the war-path. But in time we surfeit even of fighting, and remember our lodges again.”

Menehwehna paused awhile, and patted the dog's head.

“Therefore, brother, were you of our race, I should not wonder that the spirit of war has gone out of you. I myself am weary of it for a season ; I forget that Frenchman differs from Englishman, and think of the sound of thin ice above the beaver's wash, the blood of the red-deer's hocks on the snow, the smell of his steak over the fire. But of the pale-faces some are warriors, some are not ; and the warriors fight, year in and year out, whenever they can. That is your calling, brother, is it not ?”

“I am not grown a coward, I hope.”

“No,” said Menehwehna thoughtfully, “you are not a coward ; else my heart had never gone out to you. But I think there is something dead within you that must come to life, and something alive within you that must die, before you grow into a warrior again. As for your going back to-day, listen——

“There was war once between our nation and the Pottawatamies, and in an open fight our braves killed many of their enemies and scattered the rest to their villages. Great was the victory, but mournful ; for in the chase that followed it an arrow pierced the throat of the leader of the Ojibways. His name was Daimeka, and he a chief in my own island of Michilimackinac. Where he fell there he lay. His people lifted the body and propped it against a tree, seated, with its face towards the forest into which the Pottawatamies had fled. They wiped the dirt from his head-dress, set his bow against his shoulder, and so, having lamented him, turned their faces northward to their own country.

“But Daimeka, although he could neither speak nor stir, saw all that his friends did, and heard all that they said. He listened to their praises of him and their talk of their

victory, and was glad ; he felt the touch of their hands as they set out his limbs against the tree, but his own hands he could not lift. His tears, indeed, ran as they turned to abandon him ; but this sign they did not see, and he could give no other.

“The story says that little by little his hot tears melted the frost that bound him ; and by-and-by, as he remembered the cry of home-coming—‘ *Kumad-ji-wug !* We have conquered !’—his spirit put forth an effort as a babe in its mother’s travail, and he found his feet and ran after the braves. Then was he mad with rage to find that they had no eyes for him, and he no voice to call their attention. When they walked forward he walked forward, when they halted he halted, when they slept he slept, when they awoke he awoke ; nay, when they were weary he felt weariness. But for all the profit it brought him he might still have been sitting under the tree ; for their eyes would not see him, and his talk to them was as wind.

“And this afflicted him so that at length he began to tear open his wounds, saying, ‘This, at least, will move them to shame, who owe their victory to me !’ But they heeded nothing ; and when he upbraided them they never turned their heads.

“At length they came to the shore where

they had left the canoes, and put across for the island. As they neared it the men in Daimeka's canoe raised the war-shout, '*Kumad-ji-zwug!* We have conquered!' and old men, wives and children came running from the village, his own father and wife and children among them. 'Daimeka is dead!' was shouted many times in the uproar; and the warriors spoke his praises while his father wept, and his wife, and his two small ones.

"'But I am alive!' Daimeka shouted; for by this time he was in a furious passion. Then he ran after his wife, who was fleeing towards his own lodge, tearing her hair as she went. 'Listen to me, woman!' he entreated, and would have held her, but could not. He followed her into the lodge and stood over her as she sat on the bed, with her hands in her lap, despairing. 'But I am alive!' he shouted again. 'See how my wounds bleed; bind them, and give me food. To bleed like this is no joke, and I am hungry.' 'I have no long time to live,' said the woman to one of the children, 'even now I hear my man calling me, far away.' Daimeka, beside himself, beat her across the head with all his force. She put up a hand. 'Children, even now I felt his hand caressing me. Surely I have not long to live.'

“‘I was better off under the tree,’ said Daimeka to himself, and strode forth from the lodge. By the shore he launched one of the canoes ; and now he felt no wish in his heart but to return to the battlefield and sit there dead, if only he could find his body again which he had left—as he now felt sure—sitting beneath the tree.

“On the fourth day he reached the battlefield. Night was falling, and as he sought the tree he came on a blazing fire. Across it he could see the tree plainly, and at the foot of it his body with the light on its face.

“He stepped aside to walk round the fire ; but it moved as he moved, and again stood in his path. A score of times he tried to slip by it, but always it barred his way, and always beyond it stood the tree, with his own face fronting him across the blaze.

“‘Fire, I am a fool,’ said he at the last ; ‘but, fire, thou art a worse fool to think that Daimeka would turn his back!’ And so saying he strode straight through its flame. At once he found himself seated with his back to the tree in his dress of war, with his bow resting against his shoulder. ‘Now I am dead,’ said he, contentedly ; nevertheless he began to finger his bow. ‘On what do the dead feed themselves?’ he wondered ;

and, for a trial, fixed and shot an arrow at a passing bird : for above the tree there was clear sky, though darkness lay around its foot and in the darkness the fire still burned. The bird fell ; he plucked it, cooked it at the fire, and ate.

“ ‘In life I never ate better partridge,’ said Daimeka, ‘but now that I am a real ghost I will return once more to Michilimackinac and frighten my wife out of her senses, for she deserves it.’

“So when the fire died down he arose, warm in all his limbs, and started northward again. On the fourth day he found his canoe where he had left it, and pushed off for the island. But, as he neared the shore, a man who had been standing there ran back to the village, and soon all his folk came running down to the beach, his wife in their midst.

“ ‘Daimeka !’ they cried. ‘It is indeed Daimeka returned to us !’

“ ‘That may be,’ said Daimeka, as his wife flung her arms around him ; ‘and again, it may not be. But, dead or alive, I find it good enough.’

“Such, my brother, is the tale of Daimeka. Is it better, now, to return to your people as a ghost or as a man who has found himself?”

John lifted a face of misery.

"Come," said Menehwehna, looking him straight in the eyes, and letting his hand rest from patting the dog, which turned and licked it feebly.

"I will come," said John.

CHAPTER XVIII

NETAWIS

THE encampment stood under the lee of a tall sandhill, a few paces back from the brink of a frozen river. Here the forest ended in a ragged fringe of pines; and, below, the river spread into a lagoon, with a sandy bar between it and the lake, and a narrow outlet which shifted with every storm. The summer winds drove up the sand between the pine-stems and piled it in hummocks, gaining a few yards annually upon the forest as the old trees fell. The winter winds brought down the snow and whirled it among the hummocks until these too were covered.

For three weeks the encampment had been pitched here; and for two weeks snow had fallen almost incessantly, banking up the lodges and freezing as it fell. At length wind and snow had ceased and given place to a hard black frost, still and aching, and a sky of steel, and a red, rayless sun.

A man came down the river-bank, moving clumsily in his snow-shoes over the hummocks; a man dressed as an Indian, in blanket-cloak and scarlet *mitases*. His head was shaven to the crown around a top-knot skewered with heron's feathers; his face painted with black, vermilion, and a single streak of white between the eyebrows. He carried a gun under his left arm, and over his shoulder a pole to which he had slung the bodies of five beavers. Two dogs ran ahead of him straight for the encampment, which he had not discerned until they began to salute it with glad barking.

Five lodges formed the encampment—four of them grouped in a rough semicircle among the main lodge, which stood back close under the sand-bank where an eddy of wind had scooped it comparatively clear of snow.

The hunter followed his dogs to the door of the main lodge and lifted its frozen tent-flap.

"Is it well done, Menehwehna?" he asked, and casting his pole with its load upon the floor he clapped his mittened hands together for warmth. "Ough!" He began to pull the mittens off cautiously.

Menehwehna, seated with his back against the roof-pole (he had lain sick and fasting there all day), looked triumphantly towards

his wife, who crouched with her two daughters by the lodge fire.

"Said I not that he would bring us luck? And, being bitten, did they bite, my brother?" he asked mischievously.

"A little. It did not hurt at the time."

One of the two girls rose from beside the fire.

"Show me your hands, Netawis," she said.

Netawis—that is to say, John à Cleeve—stretched out his lacerated hands to the fire-light. As he did so his blanket-cloak fell back, showing a necklace of wampum about his throat and another looser string dangling against the stained skin of his breast. On his outstretched wrists two silver bangles twinkled, and two broad bands of silver on the upper arms.

The girl fetched a bladder of beaver-fat and anointed his hands, her own trembling a little. Azoka was husband-high, and had been conscious for some weeks of a bird in her breast, which stirred and began to flutter whenever she and Netawis drew close. At first, when he had been fit for little but to make kites for the children, she had despised him and wondered at her father's liking. But Netawis did not seem to care whether folks despised him or not; and this piqued her. Whatever had to be learnt he learned humbly, and now the young men had ceased

to speak of him as a good-for-nothing, Azoka began to think that his differing from them was not wholly against him ; and all the women acknowledged him to be slim and handsome.

"Many thanks, cousin," said Netawis as she bound up the wounds. Then he began to talk cheerfully over his shoulder to Menehwehna. "Five washes I tried, and all were empty ; but by the sixth the water bubbled. Then I wished that I had you with me, for I knew that my hands would suffer." He smiled ; this was one of his un-Indian tricks.

"It was well done, brother," said Menehwehna, and his eyes sought those of his wife Meshu-kwa who, still crouching by the fire, gazed across it at the youth and the girl.

"But that is not all. While I was at work the dogs left me. At first I did not miss them ; and then, finding them gone, I made sure they had run home in scorn of my hunting. But no ; their tracks led me to a tree, not far up the stream, and there I found them. They were not barking, but sometimes they would nose around the trunk and sometimes fall back to a little distance and sit whining and trembling while they stared up at it."

"And the tracks around the tree?"

"I could find none but what the dogs themselves had made. I tapped the tree, and it was hollow. Then I saw on the north side, a little above my head, many deep scratches with moss hanging in strips from them. The trunk ran up straight, and was so stout that my two arms would not span more than a tenth of it; but the scratches went up to the first fork, and there must be the opening, as I guess."

"Said I not that Netawis would become a hunter and bring us luck?" asked Menehwehna again. "He has found bear."

"Bear! Bear! Our Netawis has found bear!" cried two small urchins who had been rolling and tumbling with the dogs and almost burning their toes at the edges of the fire. They were the children of Azoka's elder sister Seeu-kwa, Muskingon's widow. Scrambling past Menehwehna, who never spoke harshly to them, and paying no heed to their mother's scolding, they ran out into the snow to carry the news to the other lodges.

"Our Netawis has found bear!"

"What news is this?" asked some of the young men who lived in a lodge apart—the bachelors' lodge—gathering round the doorway. "Seeu-kwa, look to it that your children do not grow up to be little liars."

Now John, surprised to find his news so important, had turned to Azoka with a puzzled smile. The firelight which danced on his face danced also on the long bead necklace heaving like a snake with the rise and fall of her bosom. He stared down at it, and Azoka—poor girl—felt his wrist trembling under her touch; but it was with the thought of another woman. She caught her hand away; and John, looking up, saw a young Indian, Ononwe by name, watching him gloomily from the doorway.

“Ask Netawis to tell the story,” said Menehwehna. So John told it again, and added that it had been difficult to call the dogs away from the tree.

“But about the bear I say nothing; that is Menehwehna’s talk. I only tell you what I saw.”

“The wind has fallen,” said one, “and soon the moon will be up. Let us go and prove this tale of Netawis.”

Meshu-kwa opposed this, calling it folly. “We have no axes heavy enough for tree-cutting,” she said; not giving her real reason, which was that she came of a family which claimed descent from a bear. When they mocked at her she said, “Also—why should I hide it?—there came to me an evil dream last night.”

"This is the first that I have heard of your evil dream," answered Menehwehna, and gave order that after supper Netawis should lead the party to the tree, promising that he himself would follow as soon as the sickness left him.

At moonrise, therefore, they set out—men and women together, and even the small children. But Menehwehna called Azoka back from the door of the lodge.

"My daughter," he asked, they two being left alone, "has Ononwe a cause of quarrel against Netawis?"

"They are good friends," Azoka answered innocently. "Ononwe never speaks of Netawis but to praise. Surely my father has heard him?"

"That is returning a ball I never flung," her father said, fixing grave eyes on her, under which she flinched. "I am thinking that the face of Netawis troubles the clear water that once was between you and Ononwe. Yet you tell me that Ononwe praises him. Sit down, therefore, and hear this tale."

Azoka looked rebellious; but no one in his own household disobeyed Menehwehna—or out of it, except at peril.

"There was a man of our nation once, a young man, and good-looking as Ononwe;

so handsome that all the village called him the Beau-man. This Beau-man fell deeply in love with a maiden called Mamondagokwa, who also was passably handsome ; but she had no right to scorn him as she did, both in private and openly, so that all the village talked of his ill-success. This talk so preyed on his mind that he fell ill, and when his friends broke up their camp after a winter's hunting to return to the village, he lay on his bed and would not stir, but declared he would remain and die in the snow rather than look again on the face of her who scorned him. So at length they took down the lodge about him and went their ways, leaving him to die.

“But when the last of them was out of sight this Beau-man arose and, wandering over the ground where the camp had been, he gathered up all kinds of waste that his comrades had left behind—scraps of cloth, beads, feathers, bones and offal of meat, with odds and ends of chalk, soot, grease, everything that he could pick out of the trodden snow. Then, having heaped them together, he called on his guardian *manitou*, and together they set to work to make a man. They stitched the rags into coat, *mitases* and mocassins, and garnished them with beads and fringes ; of the feathers they

made a head-dress, with a frontlet; and then, taking mud, they plastered the offal and bones together and stuffed them tightly into the garments. The *manitou* breathed once, and to the eye all their patchwork became fresh and fine clothing. The *manitou* breathed twice, and life came into the figure, which the Beau-man had been kneading into the shape of a handsome youth. 'Your name,' said he, 'is Moowis, or the Muck-man, and by you I shall take my revenge.'

"So he commanded the Muck-man to follow, and together they went after the tracks of the tribe and came to the village. All wondered at the Beau-man's friend and his fine new clothes; and, indeed, this Moowis had a frank appearance that won all hearts. The chief invited him to his lodge, and begged the Beau-man to come too; he deserved no less for bringing so distinguished a guest. The Beau-man accepted, but by-and-by began to repent of his deception when he saw the Muck-man fed with deer tongue and the moose's hump while he himself had to be content with inferior portions, and when he observed further that Mamondago-kwa had no eyes for anyone but the Muck-man, who began to prove himself a clever rogue. The chief would have promoted Moowis to the first place by the

fire ; but this (for it would have melted him) he modestly refused. He kept shifting his place while he talked, and the girl thought him no less vivacious than modest, and no more modest than brave, since he seemed even to prefer the cold to the cheerful warmth of the hearth. The Beau-man attempted to talk ; but the Muck-man had always a retort at which the whole company laughed, until the poor fellow ran out of the lodge in a fury of shame and rage. As he rose he saw the Muck-man rise, with the assent of all, and cross over to the bridegroom's seat beside Mamondago-kwa, who welcomed him as a modest maiden should when her heart has been fairly won.

“So it happened—attend to me well, my daughter—that Mamondago-kwa married a thing of rags and bones, put together with mud. But when the dawn broke her husband rose up and took a bow and spear, saying, ‘I must go on a journey.’ ‘Then I will go with you,’ said his bride. ‘My journey is too long for you,’ said the Muck-man. ‘Not so,’ answered she ; ‘there is no journey that I could not take beside you, no toil that I could not share for love of you.’ He strode forth, and she followed him at a distance ; and the Beau-man, who had kept watch all night outside their lodge, followed

also at a distance, unseen. All the way along the rough road Mamondago-kwa called to her husband ; but he went forward rapidly, not turning his head, and she could not overtake him. Soon, as the sun rose, he began to melt. Mamondago-kwa did not see the gloss go out of his clothes, nor his handsome features change back again into mud and snow and filth. But still as she followed she came on rags and feathers and scraps of clothing, fluttering on bushes or caught in the crevices of the rocks. She passed his mittens, his mocassins, his *mitases*, his coat, his plume of feathers. At length, as he melted, his footprints grew fainter, until she lost even his track on the snow. 'Moowis ! Moowis !' she cried ; but now there was none to answer her, for the Muck-man had returned to that out of which he was made."

Menehwehna ceased and looked at his daughter steadily.

"And did the Beau-man find her and fetch her back ?" asked Azoka.

"The story does not say, to my knowledge ; but it may be that Ononwe could tell you."

Azoka stepped to the moonlit doorway and gazed out over the snow.

“And yet you love Netawis?” she asked, turning her head.

“So much that I keep him in trust for his good, against a day when he will go and never return. But that is not a maiden’s way of loving, unless maidens have changed since I went a-courting them.”

Netawis having led them to the tree, the young men fell to work upon it at once. It measured well over ten fathoms in girth; and by daybreak, their axes being light, they had hewed it less than half-way through. After a short rest they attacked it again, but the sun was close upon setting when the tree fell—with a rending scream which swelled into a roar so human-like that the children ran with one accord and caught hold of their elders’ hands.

John, with Seeu-kwa’s small boys clinging to him, stood about thirty paces from the fallen trunk. Two or three minutes passed, and he wondered why the men did not begin to jeer at him for having found them a mare’s nest. For all was quiet. He wondered also why none of them approached the tree to examine it.

“I shall be the mock of the camp from this moment,” he thought, and said aloud, “Let go of my hands, little ones; there is no more danger.”

But they clung to him more tightly than ever; for a great cry went up. From the opening by the fork of the trunk a dark body rolled lazily out upon the snow—an enormous she-bear. She uncurled and gathered herself up on all fours, blinking and shaking her head as though the fall had left her ears buzzing, and so began to waddle off. Either she had not seen the crowd of men and women, or perhaps she despised it.

“Ononwe! Ononwe!” shouted the Indians; for Ononwe, gun in hand, had been posted close to the opening.

He half-raised his gun, but lowered it again.

“Netawis found her,” he said quietly. “Let Netawis shoot her.”

He stepped back towards John who, almost before he knew, found the gun thrust into his hands; for the children had let go their clasp.

Amid silence he lifted it and took aim, wondering all the while why Ononwe had done this. The light was fading. To be sure he could not miss the bear’s haunches, now turned obliquely to him; but to hit her without killing would be scarcely less dishonouring than to miss outright, and might be far more dangerous. His hand and forearm trembled too—with the exertion of hew-

ing, or perhaps from the strain of holding the children. Why had he been fool enough to take the gun? He foretasted his disgrace even as he pulled the trigger.

It seemed to him that as the smoke cleared the bear still walked forward slowly. But a moment later she turned her head with one loud snap of the jaws and lurched over on her side. Her great fore-pads smote twice on the powdery snow, then were still.

He had killed her, then; and, as he learned from the applause, by an expert's shot, through the spine at the base of the skull. John had aimed at this merely at a guess, knowing nothing of bears or their vulnerable points, and in this ignorance neglecting a far easier mark behind the pin of the shoulder.

But more remained to wonder at; for the beast being certified for dead, Meshu-kwa ran forward and kneeling in the snow beside it began to fondle and smooth the head, calling it by many endearing names. She seated herself presently, drew the great jaws on to her lap and spoke into its ear, beseeching its forgiveness. "O bear!" she cried for all to hear, "O respected grandmother! You yourself saw that this was a stranger's doing. Believe not that Meshu-kwa is guilty of your death, or any of her tribe. It was

a stranger that disturbed your sleep, a stranger who fired upon you with this unhappy result !”

The men stood around patiently until this propitiation was ended ; and then fell to work to skin the bear, while Meshu-kwa went off with her daughters to the lodges, to prepare the cooking pots. In passing John she gave him a glance of no good will.

That night, as Azoka stood by a cauldron in which the bear's fat bubbled, and the young men idled around the blaze, she saw Netawis draw Ononwe aside into the darkness. Being a quick-witted girl she promptly let slip her ladle into the fat, as if by mischance, and ran to her father's lodge for another, followed by Meshu-kwa's scolding voice. The lodge had a back-exit towards the wall of the sandhill, where the wind's eddy had swept a lane almost clear of snow ; and Azoka pushed her pretty head through the flap-way here in time to spy the dark shadows of the pair before they disappeared behind the bachelors' lodge. Quietly as a pantheress she stole after them, smoothing out her footprints behind her until she reached the trampled snow ; and so, coming to the angle of the bachelors' lodge, cowered listening.

“But suppose that I had missed my shot?”

said the voice of Netawis. "I tell you that my heart was as wax; and when the lock fell, I saw nothing. Why, what is the matter with you, Ononwe?"

"I thought you had led me here to quarrel with me," Ononwe answered slowly, and Azoka held her breath.

"Quarrel, brother? Why should I quarrel with you? It was a risk, as I am telling you; but you trusted me, and I brought you here to thank you that in your good heart you gave the shot up to me."

"But it was not my good heart." Ononwe's voice had grown hoarse. "It was an evil thought in my head, and you will have to quarrel with me, Netawis."

"That Ononwe is a good man," said Azoka to herself.

"I do not understand. Did you expect me, then, to miss? Do not say, brother, that you gave me the gun *wishing* me to miss and be the mock of the camp!"

"Yes, and no. I thought, if you took the gun, it would not matter whether you hit or missed."

"Why?"

"Are you so simple, Netawis? Or is it in revenge that you force me to tell? . . . Yes, I have played you an evil trick, and by an evil tempting. I saw you with Azoka. . . .

I gave you the gun, thinking, 'If he misses, the whole camp will mock him, and a maid turns from a man whom others mock. But if he should kill the bear, he will have to reckon with Meshu-kwa. Meshu-kwa fears ill-luck, and she will think more than twice before receiving a son-in-law who has killed her grandmother the bear.'"

"I will marry Netawis," said Azoka to herself, shutting her teeth hard. And yet she could not feel angry with Ononwe as she ought.

But it seemed that neither was Netawis angry; for he answered with one of those strange laughs of his. She had never been able to understand them, but she had never heard one that sounded so unhappy as did this.

"My brother," said Netawis — and his voice was gentle and bitterly sorrowful — "if you did this in guile, I have shot better indeed than you to-day. As for Meshu-kwa, I must try to be on good terms with her again; and as for Azoka, she is a good girl, and thinks as little of me as I of her. Last night when you saw us . . . I remember that I looked down on her and something reminded me . . . of one . . ." He leaned a hand against a pole of the lodge and gripped it as the anguish came on him and shook him in

the darkness. "Damn!" cried John à Cleeve, with a sob.

"Was that her name?" asked Ononwe gravely, hardly concealing the relief in his voice.

But Azoka did not hear Netawis' answer as she crept back, smoothing the snow over her traces.

CHAPTER XIX

THE LODGES IN THE SNOW

THE fat lay six inches deep on the bear's ribs ; and, being boiled down, filled six porcupine skins.

“Said I not that Netawis would bring us good luck?” demanded Menehwehna.

But Meshu-kwa claimed the head of her ancestress, and set it up on a scaffold within the lodge, spreading a new blanket beneath it and strewing tobacco-leaf in front of its nose. As though poor Azoka had not enough misery, her mother took away her trinkets to decorate the bear, and forced her to smear her pretty, ochred face with cinders. Then for a whole day the whole family sat and fasted ; and Azoka hated fasting. But next morning she and Seeu-kwa swept out the lodge, making all tidy. Pipes were lit, and Menehwehna, after blowing tobacco-smoke into the bear's nostrils, began a long harangue on the sad necessity which lay upon men to destroy their best friends. His wife's

eye being upon him, he made an excellent speech, though he did not believe a word of it; but as a chief who had married the daughter of a chief, he laid great stress upon her pedigree, belittling his own descent from the *canicu*, or war eagle, with the easier politeness because he knew it to be above reproach. When he had ended, the family, Meshu-kwa included, seated themselves and ate of the bear's flesh very heartily.

A few days later, they struck their camp and moved inland, for the beaver were growing scarcer, and the heavy fall of snow hid their houses and made it difficult to search the banks for washes. But raccoon were plentiful at their new station, and easy to hunt. Before the coming of the Cold Moon—which is January—John was set to number the peltries, which amounted to three hundred odd; and the scaffold, on which the dried venison hung out of reach of the wolves, was a sight to gladden the heart. Only the women grumbled when Menehwehna gave order to strike camp, for theirs were the heaviest loads.

Azoka did not grumble. She could count now on Ononwe to help her with her burden, since, like a sensible girl, she had long since made up her quarrel with him and they were to be married in the spring on their return to

the village. She had quite forgiven Netawis. Hers was that delicious stage of love when the heart, itself so happy, wants all the world to be happy too. Once or twice John caught her looking at him with eyes a little wistful in their gladness ; he never guessed that she had overheard his secret and pitied him, but dared not betray herself. Ononwe, possessed with his new felicity, delighted to talk of it whenever he and John hunted together.

Did it hurt? Not often ; and at the moment not much. But at night, when sleep would not come, when John lay staring at the chink in the doorway beyond which the northern lights flickered, then the wound would revive and ache with the aching silence. Once, only once, he had started out of sleep to feel his whole body flooded with happiness ; in his dream the curtains of the lodge had parted and through them Diane had come to him. Standing over his head she had shaken the snow from her cloak and from her hair, and the scattered flakes had changed into raindrops, and the raindrops into singing birds, and the lodge into a roof of sunlit boughs, breaking into leaf with a scent of English hawthorn, as she stretched out her hands and knelt and he drew her to his heart. Her cheek was cold from her long journey ; but a warm breeze

played beneath the boughs, and under her falling hair against his shoulder her small hand stole up and touched his silver arm-lets. Nay, surely that touch was too real for any dream. . . .

He had sprung up and pulled aside the curtain ; but she was gone. His eyes searched across a waste where only the snow-wraiths danced, and far to the north the Aurora flickered with ribbons of ghostly violet.

Would she come again? Yes, surely, under the stars and across the folds and hollows of the snow, that vision would return, disturbing no huddled bird, waking no sleeper in the lodge ; would lift the curtain and stretch out both hands and be gathered to him. Though it came but once in a year he could watch for it by night, live for it by day.

But by day he knew his folly. He was lost, and in forgetting lay his only peace. He never once accused his fortune nor railed against a God he could not believe in. He had come to disaster through his own doubts ; himself had been the only real enemy, and that sorry self must be hidden and buried out of sight.

On the whole he was burying it successfully. He liked these Ojibways, and had

unlearnt his first disgust of their uncleanly habits, though as yet he could not imitate them. He had quite unlearnt his old loathing of Menehwehna for the sergeant's murder. Menehwehna was a fine fellow, a chief too, respected among all the nations west of Fort Niagara. John's surprise had begun at Fort Rouillé, where, on Menehwehna's word of credit only, the Tobacco Indians had fetched out paint and clothes to disguise him, and had smuggled him, asking no questions, past the fort and up through the Lake aux Claies to Lake Huron. At Michilimackinac a single speech from Menehwehna had won his welcome from the tribe ; and they were hunting now on the borders of the Ottawas through the favour of Menehwehna's friendship with the Ottawa chief at l'Arbre Croche. John saw that the other Indians considered him fortunate in Menehwehna's favour, and if he never understood the full extent of the condescension, at least his respect grew for one who was at once so kingly and so simple, who shared his people's hardships, and was their master less by rank than by wisdom in council, skill of hand, and native power to impress and rule.

Of the deer especially Menehwehna was a mighty hunter ; and in February the wealth

of the camp increased at a surprising rate. For at this season the snow becomes hard enough to bear the hunter and his dogs, but the sharp feet of the deer break through its crust and his legs are cut to the bone. Often a hunting party would kill a dozen stags in two or three hours, and soon the camp reckoned up five thousand pounds of dried venison, all of which had to be carried back seventy miles to the shore of the lake near l'Arbre Croche, where the canoes had been left.

Early in March the women began to prepare the bundles, and in the second week the return began, all starting at daybreak with as much as they could carry, and marching until noon, when they built a scaffold, piled their loads upon it, and returned to the camp for more. When all had been carried forward one stage, the lodge itself was removed, and so, stage by stage, they brought their wealth down to the coast. As they neared it they fell in with other lodges of Ojibways, mostly from Michilimackinac, gathering for the return voyage up the lake.

Having recovered and launched their canoes, which had lain hidden among the sandhills, they loaded up and coasted cheerfully homewards by way of La Grande

Traverse and l'Arbre Croche, and on the last day of April landed under the French fort of Mackinac, which looked across the strait to Cap Saint Ignace. A dozen traders were here awaiting them; and with these Menehwehna first settled out of the common fund for guns, powder, and stores supplied on credit for the winter's hunting. He then shared the residue among the camp, each hunter receiving the portion fixed by custom; and John found himself the owner of one hundred and twenty beaver skins, fifty raccoon, and twelve otter, besides fifty dubious francs in cash. The bear skin, which also fell to his share, he kept for his wedding gift to Ononwe. Twenty pounds of beaver bought a couple of new shirts; another twenty a blanket; and a handsome pair of scarlet *mitases*, fashionably laced with ribbon, cost him fifteen. Out of what remained he offered to pay Menehwehna for his first outfit, but received answer that he had amply discharged this debt by bringing good luck to the camp. Under Menehwehna's advice, therefore, he spent his gains in powder and ball, fishing-lines, tobacco, and a new lock for his gun.

"And I am glad," said Menehwehna, "that you consulted me to-day, for to-night I shall drink too much rum."

So indeed he did. That night his people—women and men—lay around the fort in shameless intoxication. It pleased John to observe that Azoka drank nothing; but on the other hand she made no attempt to restrain her lover, who, having stupefied himself with rum, dropped asleep with his head on her lap.

John, seated and smoking his pipe by the camp fire, watched her across its blaze. She leaned back against a pole of the lodge, her hands resting on Ononwe's head, her eyes gazing out into the purple night beyond the doorway. They were solemn, with the awe of a deep happiness. "And why not?" John asked himself. Her father, mother, and kinsfolk lay drunk around her; even the children had taken their share of the liquor. A disgusting sight, no doubt! yet somehow it did not move him to reprobation. He had lived for six months with this people, and they had taught him some lessons outside the craft of hunting: for example, that it takes all sorts to make a world, and that only a fool condemns his fellows for being unlike himself. At home in Devonshire he had never understood why the best farm-labourers and workmen broke out at times into reckless drinking, and lay sodden for days together; or how their wives could

accept these outbursts as a matter of course. He understood now, having served apprenticeship to hardship, how the natural man must revolt now and again from the penalty of Adam, the grinding toil, day in and day out, to wrest food from the earth for himself, his womenkind, and children. He understood, too, how noble is the discipline, though pardonable the revolt. He had discovered how little a man truly needs. He had seen in this strange life much cruelty, much crazy superstition, much dirt and senseless discomfort; but he had made acquaintance with love and self-denial. He had learnt, above all, the great lesson—to think twice before judging, and thrice before condemning.

The camp fire was dying down untended. He arose and cast an armful of logs upon it; and at the sound Azoka withdrew her eyes from the doorway and fastened them upon him.

“Netawis,” said she, “when will you be leaving us?”

“I have no thought of leaving.”

“You are not telling me the truth, now.”

“Indeed, I believe I am,” John assured her.

“But what, then, of the girl yonder, whom you wanted to marry? Has she married another man, or is she dead? Yes,

I know something about it," Azoka went on, as he stood staring amazedly. "For a long time I have wanted to tell you. That night, after you had killed the bear and Ononwe took you aside—I was afraid that you two would be quarrelling, and so I crept after you——" She waited for him to understand.

"I see," said John gravely.

"Tell me what has become of her."

"I suppose that she is living still with her own people; and there is nothing more to tell, Azoka, except that she cannot be mine, and would not if she could."

"Whose fault was it, Netawis? Yours or hers?"

"There was much fault indeed, and all of it mine; but against my marrying her it did not count, for that was impossible from the beginning. Suppose, now, your nation were at war with the Ottawas, and a young Ottawa brave fell in love with you. What would you do?"

"That is idle talk, for of course I should do nothing," said Azoka composedly. "But if I were a man and fell in love with an Ottawa maiden, it would be simple. I should carry her off."

John, being unable to find an answer to this, lit his pipe and sat staring into the fire.

“Was she an Englishwoman then?” Azoka asked after a while.

“An Englishwoman?” He looked up in surprise; then, with a glance around at the sleepers, he leaned forward until his eyes met the girl’s at close range across the flame. “Since you have learnt one secret, Azoka, I will tell you another. She was a Frenchwoman, and it is I who am English.”

But Azoka kept her composure. “My father is always wise,” she said quietly. “If he had told the truth, you would have been in great danger; for many had lost sons and brothers in the fighting, and those who came back were full of revenge. You heard their talk.”

“Then you have only to tell them, Azoka, and they may take their revenge. I shall not greatly care.”

“I am no babbler, Netawis; and, moreover, the men have put their revenge away. When the summer comes very few will want to go fighting. For my part I pay little heed to their talk of killing and scalping; to me it is all boys’ play, and I do not want to understand it. But from what I hear they think that the Englishmen will be victorious, and it is foolishness to fight on the losing side. If so——” Azoka broke off and pressed her palms together in sudden delight.

"If so?" echoed John.

"If the English win, why then you may carry off your Frenchwoman, Netawis! I do very much want you to be happy."

"And I thank you a thousand times, Azoka, for your good wishes; but I fear it will not happen in that way."

She smoothed the head of Ononwe in her lap. "Oh yes, it will," she assured him. "My father told me that you would be leaving us, some day; and now I know what he meant. He has seen her, has he not?"

"He has seen her."

"My father is never mistaken. You will go back when the time comes, and take her captive. But bring her back that I may see her, Netawis."

"But if she should resist?"

Azoka shook her pretty head. "You men never understand us. She will not resist when once you have married her; and I do very much want you to be happy."

For three days the Ojibways sprawled in drunkenness around Fort Mackinac, but on the fourth arose and departed for their island; very sullenly at first, as they launched their canoes, but with rising spirits as they neared home. And two days after their arrival Ononwe and Azoka were married.

In the midst of the marriage feast, which

lasted a week, the great thaw began ; and thereafter for a month Menehwehna watched John closely. But the spring-time could not thaw the resolve which had been hardening John's heart all the winter—to live out his life in the wilderness and, when his time came, to die there a forgotten man. He wondered now that he had ever besought Menehwehna for help to return. Although it could never be proved against him, he must acknowledge to himself that he, a British officer, was now in truth a willing deserter. But to be a deserter he found more tolerable than to return at the price of private shame.

Menehwehna, cheated of his fears, watched him with a new and growing hope. The snows melted ; May came with its flowers, June with its heat, July with the roaring of bucks in the forest ; and still the men hung about the village, fishing and shooting, or making short excursions to Sault Saint Marie or the bay of Boutchitouay, or the mouth of the Mississaki river on the north side of the lake (where the wildfowl were plentiful), but showing no disposition to go out again upon the war path as they had gone the year before. The frenzy which then had carried them hundreds of miles from their homes seemed now to be entirely spent, and the

war itself to have faded far away. Once or twice a French officer from Fort Mackinac was paddled across and landed and harangued the Indians; and the Indians listened attentively, but never stirred. Of the French soldiers drilling at the fort they spoke now with contempt.

John saw no reason for this change, and set it down to that flightiness of purpose which—as he had read in books—is common to all savages. He had yet to learn that in solitary lands the very sky becomes as it were a vast sounding-board, and rumour travels, no man knows how.

It was on his return from the Isles aux Castors, where with two score young men of his tribe he had spent three weeks in fishing for sturgeon, that he heard of the capture of Fort Niagara by the English. Azoka announced it to him.

“Said I not how it would happen?” she reminded him. “But if you leave us now, you must come back with her and see my boy. When he comes to be born he shall be called Netawis. Ononwe and I are agreed on it.”

“I have no thought of leaving,” John answered. “Fort Niagara is far from here.”

“They say also,” Menehwehna announced later, “that Stadacona has fallen.”

“Stadacona?”

“The great fortress—Quebec.”

John mused for a while. “I had a dear friend once,” he said, “and he laid me a wager that he would enter Quebec before me. It appears that he has won.”

“A friend, did my brother say?”

“And a kinsman,” John answered, recognising the old note of jealousy in Menehwehna’s voice. “But there’s no likeness between us; for he is one that always goes straight to his mark.”

“There was a name brought me with the news. Your chief was the Wolf, they said; but whether it be his own name or that of his *manitou*, I know not.”

CHAPTER XX

THE RÉVEILLÉ

A BAND of five-and-twenty Ojibways came filing down through the woods to the shore of Lake Ontario, at the point where the City of Toronto now stands. Back beyond the Lake aux Claies they had passed many lodges inhabited by women and children only, and had heard everywhere the same story: the men were all gone southward to Fort Niagara to take counsel with the English. This, too, was the goal of the Ojibways' journey, and Menehwehna hurried them forward.

Fort Rouillé by the waterside stood deserted and half ruined. They had hoped to find canoes here to carry them across the lake to Niagara ; but here, too, all the male population had stampeded a week ago for the south, and those who wanted canoes must make them. This meant two days' delay, but it could not be helped. They fell to work at once, cutting down elm-trees by

the shore and stripping off their bark, while the children gathered from the lodges and stood at a little distance, watching.

It was by no desire of his own that John made one of the embassy. As rumour after rumour of British successes came westward to Michilimackinac, and the Indians held long and anxious councils, he had grown aware that Menehwehna was watching him furtively, as if for a sign which could not be demanded in words.

“Menehwehna,” said he at length, “what is all this talk of English vengeance? It is not the way of my countrymen to remember wrongs after they have won the battle.”

“But who will assure my people of that?” asked Menehwehna. “They have heard that certain things were done in the south, and that toll will be taken.”

“What matters that to your people, though it be true? They were not at Fort William Henry.”

“But again, how shall they tell this to the English and hope to be believed?”

“You cannot hide your heart from me, Menehwehna. You wish two things of me, and the first is my leave to tell your people that I am English.”

“Without your leave I will never tell them, my brother.”

“Did I ever suppose that you would? Well, as soon as you have told them, they will clamour for me to go to Fort Niagara, and at need to entreat for them. Now I say that there will be no need; but they will compel me to go, and you too will wish it. Have I not guessed?”

Menehwehna was silent a while. “For my people I wish it,” he said at length; “but for my own part I fear more than I wish.”

“You fear it because I go into great danger. By my countrymen I shall be rightly held a deserter; and, among them, for an officer to desert is above all things shameful.”

“But,” answered Menehwehna with a cheerful readiness which proved that he had thought the matter out, “if, as you say, the Governor receive us kindly, we will hide that you are English; to that every man shall give his oath beforehand. If things go ill, we will hand you back as our prisoner and prove that we have kept you against your will.

John shook his head, but did not utter the firm resolve of his heart—that even from ignominy no such lies should save him while he had a gun to turn against himself. “Why do you fear then, Menehwehna,” he demanded, “if not for me?”

“Do not ask, my brother!” Meneh-wehna’s voice was troubled, constrained, and his eyes avoided John’s.

“Ah, well,” said John lightly, after regarding him for a moment, “to you at least I will pay some of my debt. Go and tell your people that I am English; and add—for it will save talk—that I am ready to go with them to Fort Niagara.”

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By dawn on the third day at Fort Rouillé three canoes lay finished and ready, each capable of carrying eight or nine men. Pushing off from the Toronto shore, the embassy paddled southward across the lake.

They came late that evening to a point of land four miles from Niagara, on the north side of the river mouth. Approaching it, they discerned many clusters of Indian encampments, each sending up its thin column of smoke against the sunset-darkened woods: but night had fallen long before they beached their canoes, and for the last three miles they paddled wide of the shore to skirt a fleet of fishing-boats twinkling with flambeaux, from the rays of which voices challenged them. The Ojibways answered with their own call and were made welcome. A common fear, it seemed, lay over all the

nations — Wyandots and Attiwandaronks from the west and north of Lake Erie, Nettaways and Tobacco Indians from around Nottawasaga Bay, Ottawas and Pottawatomies from the far west—who had not yet made their peace with the English. But Menehwehna, whose fear of arriving too late had kept him anxious throughout the voyage, grew cheerful again.

They landed and pitched their camp on a spit of land close beside their old friend the Ottawa chief from L'Arbe Croche, to whose lodge Menehwehna at once betook himself to learn the news. But John, weary with the day's toil, threw himself down and slept.

A touch on his shoulder awakened him at dawn, and he opened his eyes to see Menehwehna standing above him, gun in hand and dressed for an expedition.

"Come," commanded Menehwehna, adding, as John's gaze travelled around upon the sleepers, "We two, alone."

John caught up his gun, and the pair stepped out into the dawn together. An Indian path led through the forest to the southward, and Menehwehna took it, walking ahead and rapidly. Twice he turned about and looked John in the face with a searching gaze, but held on his way again

without speaking. They walked in a dawn which as yet resembled night rather than day ; a night grown diaphanous and ghost-like, a summer night surprised in its sleep and vanishing before their footfall. The flicker of fire-flies hurrying into deeper shades seemed, by a trick of eyesight, to pass into the glint of dew. The birds had not yet broken into singing, the shadows stirred with whispers, as though their broods of winged and creeping things held breath together in alarm. A thin mist drifted through the undergrowth, muffling the roar of distant waters ; and at intervals the path led across a clearing where, between the pine-trunks to the left, the lake itself came into view, with clouds of vapour heaving on its bosom.

These clearings grew more frequent until at length Menehwehna halted on the edge of one which sloped straight from his feet to a broad and rushing river. There, stepping aside, he watched John's eyes as they fell on Fort Niagara.

It stood over the angle where the river swept into the lake ; its stone walls terraced high upon earthworks rising from the water-side, its towers already bathed in sunlight, its foundations standing in cool shadow. Eyes no doubt were watching the dawn from

its ramparts ; but no sign of life appeared there. It seemed to sleep with the forests around it, its river gate shut close-lidded against the day, its empty flagstaff a needle of gold trembling upon the morning sky.

Menehwehna had seated himself, his gun across his knees, upon a fallen trunk ; and John, turning, met his eyes.

“Do we cross over?”

“To-day, or perhaps to-morrow. I wished you to see it first.”

“But why?”

“Does my brother ask why? Well, then, I was afraid.”

“Were you afraid that I might wish to go back? Answer me, Menehwehna—By whose wish am I here at all?”

“When I was a young man,” answered Menehwehna, “in the days when I went wooing after Meshu-kwa, I would often be jealous, and this jealousy would seize me when we were alone together. ‘She is loving enough now,’ I said ; ‘but how will it be when other young men are around her?’ This thought tormented me so that many times it drove me to prove her, pretending to be cold and purposely throwing her in the company of others who were glad enough—for she had many suitors. Then I would watch with pain in my heart, but

secretly, that my shame and rage might be hidden."

John eyed him for a moment in wonder. "For what did you bring me this long way from Michilimackinac?" he asked. "Was it not to speak at need for you and your nation?"

"For that, but not for that only. Brother, have you never loved a friend so that you felt his friendship worthless to you unless you owned it all? Have you never felt the need on you to test him, though the test lay a hundred leagues away? So far have I brought you, O Netawis, to show you your countrymen. In a while the fort yonder will wake, and you shall see them on the walls in their red coats, and if the longing come upon you to return to them, we will cross over together and I will tell my tale. They will believe it. Look! Will you be an Englishman again?"

"Let us turn back," answered John wearily. "That life is gone from me for ever."

"Say to me that you have no wish to go."

"I had a wish once," said John, letting the words fall slowly as his eyes travelled over the walls of the fort. "It seemed to me then that no wish on earth could be dearer. Many things have helped to kill it,

I think." He passed a hand over his eyes and let it drop by his side. "I have no wish to leave you, Menehwehna."

The Indian stood up with a short cry of joy and laid a hand on his shoulder.

"No, my friend," John continued in the same dull voice; "I will say to you only what is honest. If I return with you, it is not for your sake."

"So that you return, Netawis, I will have patience. There was a time when you set your face against me; and this I overcame. Again there was a time when you pleaded with me that I should let you escape; and still I waited, though with so small a hope that when my child Azoka began to listen for your step I scolded her out of her folly."

"In that you did wisely, Menehwehna. It is not everything that I have learned to forget."

"I told her," said Menehwehna simply, "that, as the snow melts and slides from the face of a rock, so one day all thought of us would slip from your heart and you would go from us, not once looking back. Even so I believed. But the spring came, and the summer, and I began to doubt; and, as I questioned you, a hope grew in my heart, and I played with it as a dog plays with her pups, trying its powers little by little, yet

still in play, until a day came when I discovered it to be strong and the master of me. Then indeed, my brother, I could not rest until I had put it to this proof." He lit his pipe solemnly, drew a puff or two and handed it to John. "Let us smoke together before we turn back. He that has a friend as well as wife and children needs not fear to grow old."

John stretched out a hand and touched the earthen pipe bowl. His fingers closed on it—but only to let it slip. It fell, struck against the edge of the tree stump and was shivered in pieces.

Across the valley in Fort Niagara the British drums were sounding the *réveillé*.

He did not hear Menehwehna's voice lamenting the broken pipe. He stood staring across at the fort. He saw the river-gate open, the red-coats moving there, relieving guard. He saw the flagstaff halliards shake out the red cross of England in the morning sunlight. And still, like a river, rolled the music of British drums.

"Netawis!"

Menehwehna touched his arm. At first John did not seem to hear, then his hand went up and began to unfasten the silver armlets there.

"Netawis! O my brother!"

But the ice had slipped from the rock and lay around its base in ruin, and the music which had loosened it still sang across the valley. He took a step down the slope towards it.

“You shall not go!” cried Menehwehna, and lifting his gun pointed it full at John’s back. And John knew that Menehwehna’s finger was on the trigger. He walked on unregarding.

But Menehwehna did not fire. He cast down his gun with a cry and ran to clasp his friend’s feet. What was he saying? Something about “two years.”

“Two years?” Had they passed so quickly? God! how long the minutes were now! He must win across before the drums ceased . . .

He halted and began to talk to Menehwehna very patiently, this being the easiest way to get rid of him. “Yes, yes,” he heard himself saying, “I go to them as an Indian and they will not know me. I shall be safe. Return now back to my brothers and tell them that, if need be, they will find me there and I will speak for them.”

And his words must have prevailed, for he stood by the river’s edge alone, and Menehwehna was striding back towards the wood. A boat lay chained by the farther shore and

two soldiers came down from the fort and pushed across to him.

They wore the uniform of the Forty-sixth, and one had been a private in his company ; but they did not recognise him. And he spoke to them in the Ojibway speech, which they could not understand.

From the edge of the woods Menehwehna watched the three as they landed. They climbed the slope and passed into the fort.

CHAPTER XXI

FORT AMITIÉ LEARNS ITS FATE

THAT Spring, three British generals sat at the three gates of Canada, waiting for the signal to enter and end the last agony of New France. But the snows melted, the days lengthened, and still the signal did not come ; for the general by the sea gate was himself besieged.

Through the winter he and his small army sat patiently in the city they had ruined. Conquerors in lands more southerly may bury their dead with speed, rebuild captured walls, set up a pillar and statue of Victory, and in a month or two, the green grass helping them, forget all but the glory of the battle. But here in the north the same hand arrests them and for six months petrifies the memorials of their rage. Until the Spring dissolves it, the image of war lives face to face with them, white, with frozen eyes, sparing them only the colour of its wounds.

General Murray, like many a soldier in

his army, had dreams of emulating Wolfe's glory. But Wolfe had snatched victory out of the shadow of coming winter ; and, almost before Murray's army could cut wood for fuel, the cold was upon them. For two months Quebec had been pounded with shot and shell. Her churches and hospitals stood roofless ; hundreds of houses had been fired, vaults and storehouses pillaged, doors and windows riddled everywhere. There was no digging entrenchments in the frozen earth. Walls six feet thick had been breached by artillery ; and the loose stones, so cold they were, could hardly be handled.

Among these ruins, on the frozen cliff over the frozen river, Murray and his seven thousand men settled down to wear the winter through. They were short of food, short of fuel. Frost-bite maimed them at first ; then scurvy, dysentery, fever, began to kill. They laid their dead out on the snow, to be buried when spring should return and thaw the earth ; and by the end of April their dead numbered six hundred and fifty. Yet they kept up their spirits. Early in November there had been rumours that the French under Lévis meant to march on the city and retake it. In December deserters brought word that he was on his way—that he would storm the city on the twenty-

second, and dine within the citadel on Christmas Day. In January news arrived that he was preparing scaling-ladders and training his men in the use of them. Still the days dragged by. The ice on the river began to break up and swirl past the ramparts on the tides. The end of April came, and with it a furious midnight storm, and out of the storm a feeble cry—the voice of a half-dead Frenchman clinging to a floe of ice far out on the river. He was rescued, placed in a hammock, and carried up Mountain Street to the General's quarters; and Murray, roused from sleep at three o'clock in the morning, listened to his story. He was an artillery-sergeant of Lévis' army; and that army, twelve thousand strong, was close to the gates of Quebec.

The storm had fallen to a cold drizzle of rain when at dawn Murray's troops issued from the St. Louis gate and dragged their guns out through the slush of the St. Foy road. On the ground where Wolfe had given battle, or hard by, they unlimbered in face of the enemy and opened fire. Two hours later, outflanked by numbers, having lost a third of their three thousand in the short fight, they fell back on the battered walls they had mistrusted. For a few hours the fate of Quebec hung on a hair. But the

garrison could build now ; and, while Lévis dragged up his guns from the river, the English worked like demons. They had guns, at any rate, in plenty ; and, while the French dug and entrenched themselves on the ground they had won, daily the breaches closed and the English fire grew hotter.

April gave place to May, and the artillery fire continued on the heights ; but as it grew noisier it grew also less important, for now the eyes of both commanders were fastened on the river. Two fleets were racing for Quebec, and she would belong to the first to drop anchor within her now navigable river.

Then came a day when, as Murray sat brooding by the fire in his quarters in St. Louis Street, an officer ran in with the news of a ship of war in the Basin, beating up towards the city. "Whatever she is," said the General, "we will hoist our colours." Weather had frayed out the halliards on the flagstaff over Cape Diamond, but a sailor climbed the pole and lashed the flag of St. George beneath the truck. By this time men and officers in a mob had gathered on the ramparts of the Château St. Louis, all straining their eyes at a frigate fetching up close-hauled against the wind.

Her colours ran aloft ; but they were bent,

sailor-fashion, in a tight bundle, ready to be broken out when they reached the top-gallant masthead.

An officer, looking through a glass, cried out nervously that the bundle was white. But this they knew without telling. Only—what would the flag carry on its white ground? The red cross? or the golden fleurs-de-lys?

The halliards shook; the folds flew broad to the wind; and, with a gasp, men leaped on the ramparts—flung their hats in the air and cheered—dropped, sobbing, on their knees.

It was the red cross of England.

They were cheering yet and shouting themselves hoarse when the *Lowestoffe* frigate dropped anchor and saluted with all her twenty-four guns. On the heights the French guns answered spitefully. Lévis would not believe. He had brought his artillery at length into position, and began to knock the defences vigorously. He lingered until the battleship *Vanguard* and the frigate *Diane* came sailing up into harbour; until the *Vanguard*, pressing on with the *Lowestoffe*, took or burned the vessels which had brought his artillery down from Montreal. Then, in the night, he decamped, leaving his siege-train, baggage,

and sick men behind him. News of his retreat reached Murray at nightfall, and soon the English guns were bowling round-shot after him in the dusk across the Plains of Abraham ; but by daybreak, when Murray pushed out after him, to fall on his rear, he had hurried his columns out of reach.

Three months had passed since the flying of the signal from the *Lowestoffe*, and now in the early days of August three British armies were moving slowly upon Montreal, where Lévis and Governor Vaudreuil had drawn the main French forces together for a last resistance.

Murray came up the river from Quebec with twenty-four hundred men, in thirty-two vessels and a fleet of boats in company ; followed by Lord Rollo with thirteen hundred men drawn off from dismantled Louisbourg. As the ships tacked up the river, with their floating batteries ranged in line to protect the advance, bodies of French troops followed them along the shore—regiments of white-coated infantry and horsemen in blue jackets faced with scarlet. Bourlamaque watched from the southern shore, Dumas from the northern. But neither dared to attack ; and day after day through the lovely weather, past fields and settlements

and woodlands, between banks which narrowed until from deck one could listen to the song of birds on either hand and catch the wafted scent of wild flowers, the British wound their way to Isle Sainte-Thérèse below Montreal, encamped, and waited for their comrades.

From the south came Haviland. He brought thirty-four hundred regulars, provincials, and Indians from Crown Point on Lake Champlain, and moved down the Richelieu, driving Bougainville before him.

Last, descending from the west by the gate of the Great Lakes, came the Commander-in-Chief, the cautious Amherst, with eighteen hundred soldiers and Indians and over eight hundred batteaux and whale-boats. He had gathered them at Oswego in July, and now in the second week of August had crossed the lake to its outlet, threaded the channels of the Thousand Islands, and was bearing down on the broad river towards Fort Amitié.

And how did it stand with Fort Amitié?

Well, to begin with, the Commandant was thoroughly perplexed. The British must be near; by latest reports they had reached the Thousand Islands; even hours were becoming precious, and yet most unaccountably the reinforcements had not arrived!

What could M. de Vaudreuil be dreaming of? Already the great Indian leader, Saint Luc de la Corne, had reached Coteau du Lac with a strong force of militia. Dominique Guyon had been sent down with an urgent message of inquiry. But what had been La Corne's answer? "I know not what M. de Vaudreuil intends. My business is to stay here and watch the rapids."

"Now what can be the meaning of that?" the Commandant demanded of his brother.

M. Etienne shook his head pensively. "*Rusticus expectat* . . . I should have supposed the rapids to stand in no danger."

"Had the Governor sent word to abandon the Fort, I might have understood. It would have been the bitterest blow of my life——"

"Yes, yes, brother," M. Etienne murmured in sympathy.

"But to leave us here without a word! No; it is impossible. They *must* be on their way!"

In the strength of this confidence Dominique and Bateese had been despatched down the river again to meet the reinforcements and hurry them forward.

Dominique and Bateese had been absent for a week now on this errand. Still no relief-boats hove in sight, and the British were coming down through the Thousand Islands.

Save in one respect the appearance of the Fort had not changed since the evening of John à Cleeve's dismissal. The garrison cows still grazed along the river-bank, and in the clearing under the eastern wall the Indian corn was ripe for harvest (M. Etienne suggested reaping it; the labour, he urged, would soothe every one's nerves). Only on Sans Quartier's cabbage-patch the lunette now stood complete. All the *habitants* of Boisveyrac had been brought up to labour in its erection, building it to the height of ten feet, with an abattis of trees in front and a raised platform within for the riflemen. Day after day the garrison manned it and burned powder in defence against imaginary assaults, and by this time the Commandant and Sergeant Bédard between them had discussed and provided against every possible mode of attack.

Diane stood in the dawn on the *terre-plein* of the river-wall. The latest news of the British had arrived but a few hours since, with a boatload of fugitives from the upstream mission-house of La Galette, off which an armed brig lay moored with ten cannon and one hundred men to check the advance of the flotilla. It could do no more.

The fugitives included Father Launoy, and

he had landed and begged Diane to take his place in the crowded boat. For himself (he said) he would stay and help to serve out ammunition to Fort Amitié—that was, if the Commandant meant to resist.

“Do you suppose, then, that I would retire?” the Commandant asked with indignation.

“It may be possible to do neither,” suggested Father Launoy.

But this the Commandant could by no means understand. It seemed to him that either he must be losing his wits or the whole of New France, from M. de Vaudreuil down, was banded in a league of folly. “Resist? Of course I shall resist! My men are few enough, Father; but I beg you to dismiss the notion that Fort Amitié is garrisoned by cowards.”

“I will stay with you then,” said the Jesuit. “I may be useful, in many ways. But mademoiselle will take my place in the boat and escape to Montreal.”

“I also stay,” answered Diane simply.

“Excuse me, but there is like to be serious work. They bring the Iroquois with them, besides Indians from the West.” Father Launoy spoke as one reasoning with a child.

Diane drew a small pistol from her bodice. “I have thought of that, you see.”

"But M. de Noël——" He swung round upon the Commandant, expostulating.

"In a few hours," said the Commandant, meeting his eyes with a smile, "New France will have ceased to be. I have no authority to force my child to endure what I cannot endure myself. She has claimed a promise of me, and I have given it."

The priest stepped back a pace, wondering. Swiftly before him passed a vision of the Intendant's palace at Quebec, with its women and riot and rottenness. His hand went up to his eyes, and under the shade of it he looked upon father and daughter—this pair of the old *noblesse*, clean, comely, ready for the sacrifice. What had New France done for these that they were cheerful to die for her? She had doled them out poverty, and now, in the end, betrayal; she had neglected her children for aliens, she had taken their revenues to feed extortioners and wantons, and now in the supreme act of treachery, herself falling with them, she turned too late to read in their eyes a divine and damning love. There all the while she had lived—the true New France, loyally trusted, innocently worshipped. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." . . . Father Launoy lowered his gaze to the

floor. He had looked and learned why some nations fall and others worthily endure.

All that night the garrison had slept by their arms, until with the first streak of day the drums called them out to their alarm-post.

Diane stood on the *terre-plein* watching the sunrise. As yet the river lay indistinct, a broad wan-coloured band of light stretching away across the darkness. The outwork on the slope beneath her was a formless shadow astir with smaller shadows equally formless. She heard the tread of feet on the wooden platform, the clink of side-arms and accoutrements, the soft thud of ramrods, the voice of old Bédard, peevish and grumbling as usual.

Her face, turned to the revealing dawn, was like and yet curiously unlike the face into which John à Cleeve had looked and taken his dismissal; a woman's face now, serener than of old and thoughtfuller. These two years had lengthened it to a perfect oval, adding a touch of strength to the brow, a touch of decision to the chin; and, lest these should overweight it, had removed from the eyes their clouded trouble and left them clear to the depths. The elfin Diane, the small woodland-haunted Indian, no longer looked forth from those windows; no search

might find her captive shadow behind them. She had died young, or had faded away perhaps and escaped back to her native forests.

But she is not all forgotten, this lost playmate. Some trick of gesture reappears as Diane lifts her face suddenly towards the flagstaff tower. The watchman there has spied something on the river, and is shouting the news from the summit.

His arm points down the river. What has he seen? "Canoes!"—the relief is at hand then! No: there is only one canoe. It comes swiftly and yet the day overtakes and passes it, spreading a causeway of light along which it shoots to the landing-quay.

Two men paddle it—Dominique and Bateese Guyon. Their faces are haggard, their eyes glassy with want of sleep, their limbs so stiff that they have to be helped ashore.

The Commandant steps forward. "What news, my children?" he asks. His voice is studiously cheerful.

Dominique shakes his head.

"There is no relief, Monseigneur."

"You have met none, you mean?"

"None is coming, Monseigneur. We have heard it in Montreal."

CHAPTER XXII

DOMINIQUE

“MONTREAL?”

While they stood wondering, a dull wave of sound broke on their ears from the westward, and another, and yet another—the booming of cannon far up the river.

“That will be at La Galette,” said the Commandant, answering the question in Dominique’s eyes. “Come up to your quarters, my children, and get some sleep. We have work before us.” He motioned the others to fall back out of hearing while he and Dominique mounted the slope together. “You had audience, then, of the Governor?” he asked.

“He declined to see us, Monseigneur, and I do not blame him, since he could not send us back telling you to fight. Doubtless it does not become one in M. de Vaudreuil’s position to advise the other thing—aloud.”

“I do not understand you. Why could not M. de Vaudreuil order me to fight?”

Dominique stared at his master. "Why, Monseigneur,—seeing that he sends no troops, it would be a queer message. He could not have the face."

"Yet he must be intending to strike at the English coming from Quebec?"

"They are already arrived and encamped at Isle Sainte-Thérèse below the city, and another army has come down the Richelieu from the south and joined them."

"It is clear as daylight. M. de Vaudreuil must be meaning to attack them instantly, and therefore he cannot spare a detachment—You follow me?"

"It may be so, Monseigneur," Dominique assented doubtfully.

"'May be so'! It must be so! But unhappily he does not know of this third army descending upon him; or, rather, he does not know how near it is. Yet, to win time for him, we must hold up this army at all costs."

"It is I, Monseigneur, who am puzzled. You cannot be intending——"

"Eh? Speak it out, man!"

"You cannot be intending to await these English!"

"Name of thunder! What else do you suppose? Pray, my dear Dominique, use your wits. We have to gain time, I tell

you—time for our friends below at Montreal.”

“With twenty odd men against as many hundreds? Oh, pardon me, Monseigneur, but I cannot bring my mind to understand you.”

“But since it gains time——”

“They will not stay to snap up such a mouthful. They will sail past your guns, laughing; unless—great God, Monseigneur! If in truth you intend this folly, where is Mademoiselle Diane? I did not see her in any of the boats from La Galette. Whither have you sent her, and in whose charge?”

“She is yonder on the wall, looking down on us. She will stay; I have given her my promise.”

Dominique came to a halt, white as a ghost. His tongue touched his dry lips. “Monseigneur!”—the cry broke from him, and he put out a hand and caught his seigneur by the coat-sleeve.

“What is the matter with the man?” The Commandant plucked his arm away and stood back, outraged by this breach of decorum.

But Dominique, having found his voice, continued heedless. “She must go! She *shall* go! It is a wickedness you are doing—do you hear me, Monseigneur?—a wicked-

ness, a wickedness. But you shall not keep her here ; I will not allow it ! ”

“Are you stark mad, Dominique Guyon?”

“I will not allow it. I love her, I tell you—there, I have said it ! Listen again, Monseigneur, if you do not understand : I love her, I love her—oh, get that into your head ! I love her, and will not allow it ! ”

“Certainly your brain is turned. Go to your quarters, sir ; it must be sleep you want. Yes, yes, my poor fellow, you are pale as a corpse ! Go, get some sleep, and when you wake we will forget all this.”

“Before God, Monseigneur, I am telling you the truth. I need no sleep but the sleep of death, and that is like to come soon enough. But since we were children I have loved your daughter, and in the strength of that love I forbid you to kill her.”

The Commandant swung round on his heel.

“Follow me, if you please.”

He led the way to his orderly-room, seated himself at the table, and so confronted the young man, who stood humbly enough, though with his pale face twitching.

“Dominique Guyon, once in my life I made a great mistake ; and that was when, to save my poor son’s honour, I borrowed money of one of my *censitaires*. I perceive

now what hopes you have nursed, feeding them on my embarrassments. You saw me impoverished, brought low, bereaved by God's will of my only son; you guessed that I lay awake of nights, troubled by the thought of my daughter, who must inherit poverty; and on these foundations you laid your schemes. You dreamed of becoming a *gentilhomme*, of marrying my daughter, of sitting in my chair at Boisveyrac and dealing justice among the villagers. And a fine dream it seemed to you, eh?" He paused.

"Monseigneur," Dominique answered simply, "you say some things that are true; but you say them so that all seems false and vile. Yes, I have dreamed dreams—even dreams of becoming a *gentilhomme*, as you say; but my dreams were never wicked as you colour them, seeing that they all flowed from love of Mademoiselle Diane, and returned to her."

He glanced towards the window, through which the pair could see Diane pacing the *terre-plein* in the sunlight. The sight kindled the elder man to fresh anger.

"If," said he harshly, "I tried to explain to you exactly how you insult us, it would be wasting my time and yours; and, however much you deserve it, I have no wish to wound your feelings beyond need. Let us

come to business." He unlocked a drawer and drew out three bundles of notes. "As my farmer you will know better than I the current discount on these. You come from Montreal. At what price was the Government redeeming its paper there?"

As he unfolded them, Dominique glanced at the notes, and then let his gaze wander out through the window.

"Is Monseigneur proposing to pay me the interest on his bonds?"

"To be sure I am."

"I do not ask for it."

"Devil care I if you ask or not! Count the notes, if you please."

Dominique took a packet in his hands for a moment, still with his eyes bent absently on the window, fingered the notes, and laid them back on the table.

"Monseigneur will do me the justice to own that in former times I have given him good advice in business. I beg him to keep these notes for a while. In a month or two their value will have trebled, whichever Government redeems them."

The Commandant struck the table. "In a few hours, sir, I shall be a dead man. My honour cannot wait so long; and since the question is now of honour, not of business, you will keep your advice to yourself. Be

quick, please ; for time presses, and I have some instructions to leave to my brother. At my death he will sell the Seigniory. The Government will take its quint of the purchase-money, and out of the remainder you shall be paid. My daughter will then go penniless, but at least I shall have saved her from a creditor with such claims as you are like to press. And so, sir, I hope you have your answer."

"No, Monseigneur, not my answer. That I will never take but from Mademoiselle Diane herself."

"By God, you shall have it here and now!" The Commandant stepped to the window and threw open the casement. "Diane!" he called.

She came. She stood in the doorway; and Dominique—a moment before so bold—lowered his eyes before hers. At sight of him her colour rose, but bravely. She was young, and had been making her account with death. She had never loved Dominique; she had feared him at times, and at times pitied him; but now fate had lifted her and set her feet on a height from which she looked down upon love and fear with a kind of wonder that they had ever seemed important, and even her pity for him lost itself in compassion for all men and women in trouble.

In truth, Dominique looked but a miserable culprit before her.

The Commandant eyed him grimly for a moment before turning to her.

"Diane," he said with grave irony, "you will be interested to learn that Monsieur Dominique Guyon here has done you the honour to request your hand in marriage."

She did not answer, but stood reading their faces.

"Moreover, on my declining that honour, he tells me that he will take his answer from you alone."

Still for a few seconds she kept silence.

"Why should I not answer him, papa?" she said at length, and softly. "It is not for us to choose what he should ask." She paused. "All his life Dominique Guyon has been helping us; see how he has, even in these few days, worn himself in our service!"

Her father stared at her, puzzled, not following her thought. He had expected her to be shocked, affronted; he did not know that Dominique's passion was an old tale to her, and as little did he perceive that in her present mood she put herself aside and thought only of Dominique as in trouble and needing help.

But apparently something in her face reassured him, for he stepped toward the door.

“You prefer to give him his answer alone?”

She bent her head.

For a while after the door had closed upon the Commandant, Dominique stood with eyes abased. Then, looking up and meeting the divine compassion in hers, he fell on his knees and stretched out both hands to her.

“Is there no hope for me, ma’amzelle?”

She shook her head. Looking down on him through tears, she held out a hand; he took it between his palms and clung to it, sobbing like a child.

Terrible, convulsive sobs they were at first, but grew quieter by degrees, and as the outburst spent itself a deep silence fell upon the room.

A tear had fallen upon his clasped knuckles. He put his lips to it and, imprisoning her fingers, kissed them once, reverently.

He was a man again. He stood up, yet not releasing her hand, and looked her in the face.

“Ma’amzelle, you will leave the Fort? You will let Bateese carry you out of danger? For me, of course, I stay with the Seigneur.”

“No, Dominique. All New France is dying around us, and I stay with my father

to see the end. Perhaps at the last I shall need you to help me." She smiled bravely. "You have been trying to persuade my father, I know."

"I have been trying to persuade him, and yet—yet—Oh, I will tell to you a wickedness in my heart that I could not tell even to Father Launoy! There was a moment when I thought to myself that even to have you die here and to die beside you were better than to let you go. Can you forgive me such a thought as that?"

"I forgive."

"And will you grant one thing more?"

"What is it, Dominique?"

"A silly favour, ma'amzelle—but why not? The English will be here soon, maybe in a few hours. Let me call Bateese, and we three will be children again and go up to the edge of the forest and watch for our enemies. They will be real enemies, this time; but even that we may forget, perhaps."

She stood back a pace and laughed—yes, laughed—and gaily, albeit with dewy eyes. Her hands went up as if she would have clapped them. "Why, to be sure!" she cried. "Let us fetch Bateese at once!"

They passed out into the sunlight together, and she waited in the courtyard

while Dominique ran upstairs to fetch Bateese. In five minutes' time the two brothers appeared together, Bateese with his pockets enormously bulging—whereat Diane laughed again.

“So you have brought the larder, as ever. Bateese was always prudent, and never relied on the game he killed in hunting. You remember, Dominique?”

“He was always a poor shot, ma'amzelle,” answered Dominique gravely.

“But this is not the larder!” Bateese began to explain with a queer look at his brother.

“Eh?”

“Never mind explanations! Come along, all three!” cried Dominique, and led the way. They passed out by the postern unobserved—for the garrison was assembled in the lunette under the river wall—and hurried toward the shade of the forest.

How well Diane remembered the old childish make-believe! How many scores of times had they played it together, these three, in the woods around Boisveyrac!—when Dominique and Bateese were bold huntsmen, and she kept house for them, cooking their imaginary spoils of the chase.

“We must have a fire!” she exclaimed, and hurried off to gather sticks. But when

she returned with the lap of her gown well filled, a fire was already lit and blazing.

"How have you managed it so quickly?" she asked, and with that her eyes fell on a scrap of ashes. "Where did you get this? You have been lighting with paper, Bateese—and that is not playing fair!"

Bateese, very red in the face, stooped in the smoke and crammed another handful upon the blaze.

"They were papers, ma'amzelle, upon which Dominique and I for a long time could not agree. But now"—he turned to Dominique—"there is no longer any quarrel between us. Eh, brother?"

"None, Bateese; none, if you forgive."

"What did I tell you?" cried Bateese triumphantly. "Did I not always tell you that your heart would be lighter, with this shadow gone? And there was never any shadow but this; none—none!"

"That is all very well," Diane remonstrated; "but you two have no business to hide a secret from me to-day, even though it make you happier."

"We have burnt it for a propitiation, ma'amzelle; it no longer exists." Bateese cast himself on his back at full length in the herbage and gazed up through the drifting smoke into the tree-tops and sky. "A-ah!"

said he with a long sigh, "how good God has been to me! How beautiful he has made all my life!" He propped himself on one elbow and continued with shining eyes: "What things we were going to do, in those days! What wonders we looked forward to! And all the while we were doing the most wonderful thing in the world, for we loved one another." He stretched out a hand and pointed. "There, by the bend, the English boats will come in sight. Suppose, Dominique, that as they come you launched out against them, and fought and sank the fleet single-handed, like the men in the old tales——"

"He would save New France, and live in song," Diane put in. "Would that not content any man, Bateese?" She threw back her head with a gesture which Dominique noted; a trick of her childhood, when in moments of excitement her long hair fell across her eyes and had to be shaken back.

"Ma'amzelle," he pleaded, "there is yet one favour."

"Can I grant it easily?"

"I hope so; it is that you will let down your hair for us."

Diana blushed, but put up a hand and began to uncoil the tresses. "Bateese has not answered me," she insisted. "I tell him

that a man who should do such a feat as he named would live in song for ever and ever."

"But I say to you humbly, ma'amzelle, that though he lived in song for ever and ever, the true sweetness of his life would be unknown to the singers ; for he found it here under the branches, and, stepping forth to his great deed, he left the memory for a while, to meet him again and be his reward in Heaven."

"And I say to you 'no,' and 'no,' and again 'no' !" cried Diane, springing to her feet—the childish, impetuous Diane of old. "It is in the great deed that he lives—the deed, and the moment that makes him everlasting! If Dominique now, or I, as these English came round the bend——"

She paused, meeting Dominique's eyes. She had not said "or you," and could not say it. Why? Because Bateese was a cripple. "Bateese's is a cripple's talk," said their glances one to another, guiltily, avoiding him.

Dominique's gaze, flinching a little, passed down the splendid coils of her hair and rested on the grass at her feet. She lifted a tress on her forefinger and smoothed it against the sunlight.

"There was a war once," said she, "between the Greeks and the Persians ; and the

Persians overran the Greeks' country until they came to a pass in the mountains where a few men could stand against many. There three hundred of the Greeks had posted themselves, despising death, to oppose an army of tens and hundreds of thousands. The Persian king sent forward a horseman, and he came near and looked along the pass and saw but a few Greeks combing their hair and dressing it carefully, as I am dressing mine."

"What happened, ma'amzelle?"

"They died, and live in song for ever and ever!"

She faced them, her cheeks glowing, and lifted a hand as the note of a sweet-toned bell rose upon the morning air above the voices of the birds; of the chapel-bell ringing the garrison to Mass.

The two young men scrambled to their feet.

"Come!" said Diane, and they walked back to the Fort together.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE FLAGSTAFF TOWER

TIME pressing, the Commandant had gone straight from the orderly-room in search of Father Joly. As a soldier and a good Catholic he desired to be shriven, and as a man of habit he preferred the old Curé to Father Launoy. To be sure the Curé was deaf as a post, but on the other hand the Commandant's worst sins would bear to be shouted.

"There is yet one thing upon my conscience," he wound up. "The fact is, I feel pretty sure of myself in this business, but I have some difficulty in trusting God."

It is small wonder that a confession so astonishing had to be repeated twice, and even when he heard it Father Joly failed to understand.

"But how is it possible to mistrust God?" he asked.

"Well, I don't know. I suppose that even in bringing New France so near to

destruction He is acting in loving mercy ; but all the same it will be a wrench to me if these English pass without paying us the honour of a siege. For if we cannot force them to a fight, Montreal is lost." The Commandant believed this absolutely.

Father Joly was Canadian born and bred ; had received his education in the Seminary of Quebec ; and knowing nothing of the world beyond New France, felt no doubt upon which side God was fighting. If it were really necessary to New France that the English should be delayed—and he would take the Commandant's word for it—why then delayed they would be. This he felt able to promise. " And I in my heart of hearts am sure of it," said the Commandant. " But in war one has to take account of every chance, and this may pass sometimes for want of faith."

So, like an honest gentleman, he took his absolution, and afterwards went to Mass and spent half an hour with his mind withdrawn from all worldly care, greatly to his soul's refreshment. But with the ringing of the sanctus bell a drum began to beat—as it seemed, on the very ridge of the chapel roof, but really from the leads of the flag-staff tower high above it. Father Launoy paused in the celebration, but was ordered

by a quiet gesture to proceed. Even at the close the garrison stood and waited respectfully for their Commandant to walk out, and followed in decent order to the porch. Then they broke into a run pell-mell for the walls.

But an hour passed before the first whaleboat with its load of red uniforms pushed its way into sight through the forest screen. Then began a spectacle—slow, silent, by little and little overwhelming. It takes a trained imagination to realise great numbers, and the men of Fort Amitié were soon stupefied and ceased even to talk. It seemed to them that the forest would never cease disgorging boats.

“A brave host, my children! But we will teach them that they handle a wasps’ nest.”

His men eyed the Commandant in doubt; they could scarcely believe that he intended to resist, now that the enemy’s strength was apparent. To their minds war meant winning or losing, capturing or being captured. To fight an impossible battle, for the mere sake of gaining time for troops they had never seen, did not enter into their calculations.

So they eyed him, while still the flotilla increased against the far background and came on—whaleboats, gunboats, batteaux, canoes; and still in the lessening interval

along the waterway the birds sang. For the British moved, not as once upon Lake George startling the echoes with drums and military bands, but so quietly that at half a mile's distance only the faint murmur of splashing oars and creaking thole-pins reached the ears of the watchers.

The Commandant suddenly lowered his glass and closed it with a snap, giving thanks to God. For at that distance the leading boats began heading in for shore.

"Etienne, he intends at least to summon us!"

So it proved. General Amherst was by no means the man to pass and leave a hostile post in his rear. His detractors indeed accused him of spending all his time upon forts, either in building or in reducing them. But he had two very good reasons for pausing before Fort Amitié; he did not know the strength of its defenders, and he wanted pilots to guide his boats down the rapids below.

Therefore he landed and sent an officer forward to summon the garrison.

The officer presented himself at the river-gate, and having politely suffered Sergeant Bédard to blindfold him, was led to the Commandant's quarters. A good hour passed before he reappeared, the Command-

ant himself conducting him ; and meantime the garrison amused itself with wagering on the terms of capitulation.

At the gate the Englishman's bandage was removed. He saluted, and was saluted, with extreme ceremony. The Commandant watched him out of earshot, and then, rubbing his hands, turned with a happy smile.

“To your guns, my children !”

They obeyed him, while they wondered. He seemed to take for granted that they must feel the compliment paid them by a siege in form.

The day was now well advanced, and it seemed at first that the British meant to let it pass without a demonstration. Toward nightfall, however, four gunboats descended the river, anchored and dropped down the current, paying out their hawsers and feeling their way into range. But the Fort was ready for them, and opened fire before they could train their guns ; a lucky shot cut the moorings of one clean and close by the stem ; and, the current carrying her inshore, she was hulled twice as she drifted down-stream. The other three essayed a few shots without effect in the dusk, warped back out of range, and waited for daylight to improve their marksmanship.

And with daylight began one of the strangest of sieges, between an assailant who knew only that he had to deal with stout walls, and a defender who dared not attempt even a show of a sortie for fear of exposing the weakness of his garrison. The French had ammunition enough to last for a month, and cannon enough to keep two hundred men busy; and ran from one gun to another, keeping up pretences but doing little damage in their hurry. Their lucky opening shots had impressed Amherst, and he was one to cling to a notion of his enemy's strength. He solemnly effected a new landing at six hundred yards' distance, opened his lines across the north-western corner of the fort, kept his men entrenching for two days and two nights, brought up thirty guns, and, advancing them within two hundred yards, began at his leisure to knock holes in the walls. Meantime, twenty guns, anchored out in the river, played on the broad face of the fort and swept the Commandant's lunette out of existence. And with all this prodigious waste of powder but five of the garrison had fallen, and three of these by the bursting of a single shell. The defenders understood now that they were fighting for time, and told each other that when their comedy was played out and the

inevitable moment came, the British General would not show himself fierce in revenge—"provided," they would add, "the Seigneur does not try his patience too far." It was Father Launoy who set this whisper going from lip to lip, and so artfully that none suspected him for its author; Father Launoy, who had been wont to excite the patriotism of the faithful by painting the English as devils in human shape. He was a brave man; but he held this resistance to be senseless and did not believe for an instant that Montreal would use the delay or, using it, would strike with any success.

At first the tremendous uproar of the enemy's artillery and its shattering effect on the masonry of their fortress, had numbed the militiamen's nerves; they felt the place tumbling about their ears. But as the hours passed they discovered that round-shot could be dodged and that even bursting shells, though effective against stones and mortar, did surprisingly small damage to life and limb; and with this discovery they began almost to taste the humour of the situation. They fed and rested in bomb-proof chambers which the Commandant and M. Etienne had devised in the slope of earth under the *terre-plein*; and from these they watched and discussed in safety the wreckage done

upon the empty buildings across the courtyard.

One of these caves had at the beginning of the siege been assigned to Diane; and from the mouth of it, seated with Félicité beside her, she too watched the demolition; but with far different thoughts. She knew better than these militiamen her father's obstinacy, and that his high resolve reached beyond the mere gaining of time. It seemed to her that God was drawing out the agony; and with the end before her mind she prayed Him to shorten this cruel interval.

Early on the third morning the British guns had laid open a breach six feet wide at the north-western angle, close by the foot of the flagstaff tower; and Amherst, who had sent off a detachment of the Forty-sixth with a dozen Indian guides to fetch a circuit through the woods and open a feint attack in the rear of the fort, prepared for a general assault. But first he resolved to summon the garrison again.

To carry his message he chose the same officer as before, a Captain Muspratt of the Forty-fourth Regiment.

Now as yet the cannonade had not slackened, and it chanced that as the General gave Muspratt his instructions, an artillery sergeant in command of a battery of

mortars on the left, which had been advanced within two hundred yards of the walls, elevated one of his pieces and lobbed a bomb clean over the summit of the flagstaff tower.

It was a fancy shot, fired—as the army learnt afterwards—for a wager ; but its effect staggered all who watched it. The fuse was quick, and the bomb, mounting on its high curve, exploded in a direct line between the battery and the flagstaff. One or two men from the neighbouring guns shouted bravos. The sergeant slapped his thigh and was turning for congratulations, but suddenly paused, stock-still and staring upward.

The flagstaff stood, apparently untouched. But what had become of the flag ?

A moment before it had been floating proudly enough, shaking its folds loose to the light breeze. Now it was gone. Had the explosion blown it to atoms ? Not a shred of it floated away on the wind.

A man on the sergeant's right called out positively that a couple of seconds after the explosion, and while the smoke was clearing, he had caught a glimpse of something white—something which looked like a flag—close by the foot of the staff ; and that an arm had reached up and drawn it down hurriedly. He would swear to the arm ; he had seen it distinctly above the edge of the battlements.

In his opinion the fort was surrendering, and some one aloft there had been pulling down the flag as the bomb burst.

The General, occupied for the moment in giving Captain Muspratt his instructions, had not witnessed the shot. But he turned at the shout which followed, caught sight of the bare flagstaff, and ordering his bugler to sound the "Cease firing," sent forward the captain at once to parley.

With Muspratt went a sergeant of the Forty-sixth and a bugler. The sergeant carried a white flag. Ascending the slope briskly, they were met at the gate by M. Etienne.

The sudden disappearance of the flag above the tower had mystified the garrison no less thoroughly than the British. They knew the Commandant to be aloft there with Sergeant Bédard, and the most of the men could only guess, as their enemies had guessed, that he was giving the signal of surrender.

But this M. Etienne could by no means believe ; it belied his brother's nature as well as his declared resolve. And so, while the English captain with great politeness stated his terms—which were unconditional surrender and nothing less—the poor gentleman kept glancing over his shoulder and answer-

ing at random, "Yes, yes," or "Precisely—if you will allow me," or "Excuse me a moment, until my brother——" In short, he rambled so that Captain Muspratt could only suppose his wits unhinged. It was scarce credible that a sane man could receive such a message inattentively, and yet this old gentleman did not seem to be listening!

Diane meanwhile stood at the mouth of her shelter with her eyes lifted, intent upon the tower's summit. She, too, had seen the flag run down with the bursting of the bomb, and she alone had hit in her mind on the true explanation—that a flying shard had cut clean through the up-halliard close to the staff, and the flag—heavy with golden lilies of her own working—had at once dropped of its own weight. She had caught sight, too, of her father's arm reaching up to grasp it, and she knew why. The flagstaff had a double set of halliards.

She waited—waited confidently, since her father was alive up there. She marvelled that he had escaped, for the explosion had seemed to wrap the battlements in one sheet of fire. Nevertheless he was safe—she had seen him—and she waited for the flag to rise again.

Minutes passed. She took a step forward from her shelter. The firing had ceased and

the courtyard was curiously still and empty. Then four of the five militiamen posted to watch the back of the building came hurrying across towards the gateway. She understood—her senses being strung for the moment so tensely that they seemed to relieve her of all trouble of thinking—she understood that a parley was going forward at the gate and that these men were hurrying from their posts to hear it. In her ears the bugles still sounded the “Cease firing”; and still she gazed up at the tower.

Yes—she had made no mistake! The spare halliards were shaking; in a second or two—but why did they drag so interminably?—the flag would rise again.

And it rose. Before her eyes, before the eyes of the parleyers in the gateway and of the British watching from their batteries, it rose above the edge of the battlements and climbed half-way up the mast, or a little short of half-way. There it stopped—climbed a few feet higher—and stopped again—climbed yet another foot—and slowly, very slowly, fluttered downward.

With a dreadful surmise Diane started to run across the courtyard toward the door at the foot of the tower; and even as she started a yell went up from the rear of the fort, followed by a random volley of

musketry and a second yell—a true Iroquois war-whoop.

In the gateway Captain Muspratt called promptly to his bugler. The first yell had told him what was happening ; that the men of the Forty-sixth, sent round for the feint attack, had found the rear wall defenceless and were escalading, in ignorance of the parley at the gate.

Quick as thought the bugler sounded the British recall, and its notes were taken up by bugle after bugle down the slope. The Major commanding the feint attack heard, comprehended after a fashion, and checked his men ; and the Forty-sixth, as a well-disciplined regiment, dropped off its scaling ladders and came to heel.

But he could not check his Indian guides. Once already on their progress down the river they had been baulked of their lust to kill ; and this restraint had liked them so little that already three-fourths of Sir William Johnson's Iroquois were marching back to their homes in dudgeon. These dozen braves would not be cheated a second time if they could help it. Disregarding the shouts and the bugle-calls they swarmed up the ladders, dropped within the fort, and swept through the Commandant's quarters into the courtyard.

In the doorway at the foot of the flagstaff tower a woman's skirt fluttered for an instant and was gone. They raced after it like a pack of mad dogs, and with them ran one, an Ojibway, whom neither hate nor lust, but a terrible fear, made fleetier than any.

Six of them reached the narrow doorway together, snarling and jostling in their rage. The Ojibway broke through first and led the way up the winding stairway, taking it three steps at a time, with death behind him now—though of this he recked nothing—since he had clubbed an Oneida senseless in the doorway, and these Indians, Oneidas all, had from the start resented his joining the party of guides.

Never a yard separated him from the musket-butt of the Indian who panted next after him; but above, at the last turning of the stair under a trap-door through which the sunlight poured, he caught again the flutter of a woman's skirt. A ladder led through the hatchway, and—almost grasping her frock—he sprang up after Diane, flung himself on the leads, reached out, and clutching the hatch, slammed it down on the foremost Oneida's head.

As he slipped the bolt—thank God it had a bolt!—he heard the man drop from the ladder with a muffled thud. Then, safe for

a moment, he ran to the battlements and shouted down at the pitch of his voice.

“Forty-sixth ! This way, Forty-sixth !”

His voice sounded passing strange to him. Nor for two years had it been lifted to pronounce an English word.

Having sent down his call he ran back swiftly to the closed hatchway ; and as he knelt, pressing upon it with both hands, his eyes met Diane’s.

She stood by the flagstaff with a pistol in her hand. But her hand hung stiffly by her hip as it had dropped at the sound of his shout, and her eyes stared on him. At her feet lay the Commandant, his hand still rigid upon the halliards, his breast covered by the folds of the fallen flag, and behind her, as the bursting shell had killed and huddled it, the body of old Sergeant Bédard.

Why she stood there, pistol in hand, he could partly guess. How these two corpses came here he could not guess at all. The Commandant, mortally wounded, had grasped at the falling flag, and with a dying effort had bent it upon the spare halliards and tried to hoist. It lay now, covering a wound which had torn his chest open, coat and flesh, and laid his ribs bare.

But John à Cleeve, kneeling upon the hatchway, understood nothing of this. What

beat on his brain was the vision of a face below—the face of the officer commanding—turned upwards in blank astonishment at his shout of “Forty-sixth! This way, Forty-sixth!”

The Indians were battering the hatch with their musket-butts. The bolt shook. He pressed his weight down on the edge, keeping his head well back to be out of the way of bullets. Luckily the timbers of the hatch were stout, and moreover it had a leaden casing, but this would avail nothing when the Indians began to fire at the hinges—as they surely would.

He found himself saying aloud in French, “Run, mademoiselle!—I won’t answer for the hinges. Call again to the red-coats! They will help.”

But still, while blow after blow shook the hatch, Diane crouched motionless, staring at him with wild eyes.

“They will help,” he repeated with the air of one striving to speak lucidly; then with a change of tone, “Give me your pistol, please.”

She held it out obediently, at arm’s length; but as he took it she seemed to remember, and crept close.

“Non—non!” she whispered. “C’est à moi—que tu le dois, enfin!”

From the staircase—not close beneath the hatch, but, as it seemed, far below their feet—came the muffled sound of shots, and between the shots hoarse cries of rage.

“Courage!” whispered John. He could hear that men were grappling and fighting down there, and supposed the Forty-sixth to be at hand. He could not know that the parleyers at the gate, appalled for an instant by the vision of Diane with a dozen savages in chase, had rallied at a yell from Dominique Guyon, pelted after him to the rescue, and were now at grips with the rearmost Oneidas—a locked and heaving mass choking the narrow spirals of the stairway.

“Courage!” he whispered again, and pressing a knee on the edge of the hatch reached out a hand to steady her. What mattered it if they died now—together—he and she? “*Tu dois*”—she loved him; her lips had betrayed her. “*Tu dois*”—the words sang through him, thrilling, bathing him in bliss.

“O my love! O my love!”

The blows beat upward against the hatch and ceased. He sprang erect, slid an arm around her and dragged her back—not a second too soon. A gun exploded against the hinges at their feet, blowing one loose. John saw the crevices gaping and the muzzle

of a gun pushed through to prise it open. He leaped upon the hatch, pistol in hand.

“Forty-sixth! Forty-sixth!”

What was that? Through the open crevice a British cheer answered him. The man levering against his weight lost hold of the gun, leaving it jammed. John heard the slide and thud of his fall.

“Hulloa!” hailed a cheerful voice from the foot of the ladder. “You there!—open the trap-way and show us some light!”

John knelt, slipped back the bolt, and turned to Diane. She had fallen on her knees—but what had happened to her? She was cowering before the joy in his face, shrinking away from him and yet beseeching.

“Le pistolet—donne-moi le pistolet!”—her voice hissed on the word, her eyes petitioned him desperately. “Ah, de grace! tu n’a pas le droit——”

He understood. With a passing bitter laugh he turned from her entreaties and hurled the pistol across the battlements into air. A hand flung open the hatch. A British officer—Etherington, Major of the Forty-sixth—pushed his head and shoulders through the opening and stared across the leads, panting, with triumphant jolly face.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE FORT SURRENDERS

THE red-coats, who had forced their way up the tower by weight of numbers and at the point of the bayonet, were now ordered to face about and clear the stairway ; which they did, driving the mixed rabble of Canadians and Indians down before them, and collecting the dead and wounded as they went. Five of the Oneidas had been bayoneted or trampled to death in the struggle ; two of the garrison would never fight again, and scarcely a man had escaped cuts or bruises.

But Diane, as she followed her father's body down the stairs, knew nothing of this. The dead and wounded had been removed. The narrow lancet windows let in a faint light, enough to reveal some ugly stains and splashes on the walls ; but she walked with fixed unseeing eyes. Once only on the way down her foot slid on the edge of a slippery step, and she shivered.

In the sunlight outside the doorway a group of men, mauled and sullen, some wearing bandages, others with blood yet trickling down their faces, stood listening to an altercation between M. Etienne and a couple of spick-and-span British officers. As their Commandant's body came through the doorway they drew together with a growl. Love was in that sound, and sorrow, and helpless rage. One or two broke into sobs.

The British officers—one of them was the General himself, the other his messenger, Captain Muspratt—bared their heads. M. Etienne, checked in the midst of an harangue, stepped to Diane and took her hand tenderly.

She gazed slowly around on the group of battered men. There was no reproach in her look—Had she not failed as miserably as they?—and yet it held a word of injustice. She could not know that for her sake they carried these wounds. And Dominique Guyon, the one man who could have answered her thoughts, stared savagely at the ground, offering no defence.

“Dominique Guyon,” commanded M. Etienne, “four of you will relieve these *messieurs* of their burden. Carry your master to the chapel, where you will find Father Launoy and Father Joly.”

“But pardon me, monsieur,” interposed

Amherst politely, "my soldiers will be proud to bear so gallant a foe."

"I thank you"—M. Etienne's bow was stiff and obstinate—"but I assert again that I still command this fortress, and the bearers shall be of my choosing."

Diane laid a hand on her uncle's arm. "He is dead," said she. "What matters it?" She did not understand this dispute. "Perhaps if I promise M. le Général that these men shall return to him when they have laid my father in the chapel——"

The General—a tall, lean, horse-faced man with a shrewd and not unkindly eye—yielded the point at once. "Willingly, mademoiselle, and with all the respect an enemy may pay to your sorrow."

He ordered the men to give place to the new bearers.

In the chapel Diane sank on her knees, but not to pray—rather to escape the consolations of the two priests and be alone with her thoughts. And her thoughts were not of her father. The stroke had fallen; but not yet could she feel the pain. He was happy; he alone of them all had kept his quiet vow, and died disdaining defeat; whereas she—ah, there lay the terrible thought!—she had not merely failed, had not been overpowered. In the crisis, beside

her father's corpse, she had played the traitress to her resolve.

The two priests moved about the body, arranging it, fetching trestles, draperies, and candles for the *lit de parade*, always with stealthy glances at the bowed figure in the shadow just within the door. But she knelt on, nor lifted her face.

In the sunlit courtyard without the two commanders were still disputing. M. Etienne flatly refused to yield up his sword, maintaining that he had never surrendered, had agreed to no terms of capitulation; that the red-coats had swarmed over his walls in the temporary absence of their defenders, gathered at the gateway to parley under a flag of truce, and should be drawn off at once.

The mischief was, he could not be gainsaid. Major Etherington explained—at first in English, to his General, and again, at his General's request, in the best French he could command, for the benefit of all, that he had indeed heard the recall blown, and had with difficulty drawn off his men from the scaling-ladders, persuading them (as he himself was persuaded) that the fort had surrendered. He knew nothing of the white flag at the gateway, but had formed his conclusions from the bugle-calls and the bare flagstaff above the tower.

“Nevertheless, we had not capitulated,” persisted M. Etienne.

The Major continued that, albeit he had tried his best, the Indians were not to be restrained. They had poured into the fort, and, although he had obeyed the bugles and kept his men back, it had cost him grave misgivings. But when the Ojibway called down so urgently from the summit of the tower, he had risked disobedience, hoping to prevent the massacre which he knew to be afoot. He appealed to his General to approve, or at least condone, this breach of orders. For undoubtedly massacre had been prevented. Witness the crowd he had found jammed in the stairway, and fighting ferociously. Witness the scene that had met him at the head of the stairs. Here he swung round upon John and beckoned him to stand out from the listening group of red-coats.

“It can be proved, sir,” he went on, addressing M. Etienne, “that the lady—your niece, is she not?—owes her life, and more than her life perhaps, to this savage. I claim only that, answering his call, I led my men with all possible speed to the rescue. Up there on the leads I found your brother lying dead, with a sergeant dead beside him; and their wounds again will prove to you

that they had perished by the bursting of a shell. But this man alone stood on the hatchway and held it against a dozen Iroquois, as your niece will testify. What you suppose yourself to owe him, I won't pretend to say; but I tell you—and I tell you, General—that cleaner pluck I never saw in my life."

John, the soldiers pushing him forward, stood out with bent head. He prayed that there might be no Ojibway interpreter at hand; he knew of none in the fort but Father Launoy, now busy in the chapel laying out the Commandant's body. Of all the spectators there was but one—the General himself—who had not known him either as Ensign John à Cleeve or as the wounded sergeant from Ticonderoga. He had met Captain Muspratt at Albany, and remembered him well on the march up the Hudson to Lake George. With Major Etherington he had marched, messed, played at cards, and lived in close comradeship for months together—only two years ago! It was not before their eyes that he hung his head, but before the thought of two eyes that in the chapel yonder were covered by the hands of a kneeling girl.

M. Etienne stepped forward and took his hand.

"I thank you, my friend—if you can understand my thanks."

Dominique Guyon, returning from the chapel, saw only an Indian stepping back upon the ranks of the red-coats, who clapped him on the shoulder for a good fellow ; and Dominique paid him no more attention, being occupied with M. Etienne's next words.

"Nevertheless," said M. Etienne, turning upon Amherst, "my duty to his Majesty obliges me to insist that I have not capitulated ; and your troops, sir, though they have done me this service, must be at once withdrawn."

And clearly, by all the rules of war, M. Etienne had the right on his side. Amherst shrugged his shoulders, frowning and yet forced to smile—the fix was so entirely absurd. As discipline went in these North American campaigns, he commanded a well-disciplined army ; but numbers of provincials and batteau-men had filtered in through the breaches almost unobserved during the parley, and were now strolling about the fortifications like a crowd of inquisitive tourists. He ordered Major Etherington to clear them out, and essayed once more to reason with the enemy.

"You do not seriously urge me, monsieur,

to withdraw my men and renew the bombardment?"

"That is precisely what I require of you."

"But—good heavens, my dear sir!—look at the state of your walls!" He waved a hand towards the defences.

"I see them; but *you*, sir, as a gentleman, should have no eyes for their condition—on this side."

The General arched his eyebrows and glanced from M. Etienne to the Canadians; he did not for a moment mean to appeal to them, but his glance said involuntarily, "A pretty madman you have for commander!"

And in fact they were already murmuring. What nonsense was this of M. Etienne's? The fort had fallen, as any man with eyes could see. Their Commandant was dead. They had fought to gain time? Well, they had succeeded, and won compliments even from their enemy.

Corporal Sans Quartier spoke up. "With all respect, M. le Capitaine, if we fight again some of us would like to know what we are fighting for."

M. Etienne swung round upon him.

"Tais-toi, poltron!"

A murmur answered him; and looking along the line of faces he read sympathy,

respect, even a little shame, but nowhere the response he sought.

Nor did he reproach them. Bitter reproaches indeed shook his lips, but trembled there and died unuttered. For five—maybe ten—long seconds he gazed, and so turned towards the General.

“Achevez, monsieur ! . . . Je vous demande pardon si vous me trouvez un peu pointilleux.” His voice shook ; he unbuckled his sword, held it for a moment between his hands as if hesitating, then offered it to Amherst with the ghost of a bitter smile. “Cela ne vaut pas—sauf à moi—la peine de le casser . . .”

He bowed, and would have passed on towards the chapel. Amherst gently detained him.

“I spare you my compliments, sir, and my condolence ; they would be idly offered to a brave man at such a moment. Forgive me, though, that I cannot spare to consult you on my own affairs. Time presses with us. You have, as I am told, good pilots here who know the rapids between this and Montreal, and I must beg to have them pointed out to me.”

M. Etienne paused. “The best pilots, sir, are Dominique Guyon there, and his brother Bateese. But you will find that

most of these men know the river tolerably well."

"And the rest of your garrison? Your pardon, again, but I must hold you responsible, to deliver up *all* your men within the Fort."

"I do not understand . . . This, sir, is all the garrison of Fort Amitié."

Amherst stared at the nineteen or twenty hurt and dishevelled men ranged against the tower wall, then back into a face impossible to associate with untruth.

"M. le Capitaine," said he very slowly, "if with these men you have made a laughing-stock of me for two days and a half, why then I owe you a grudge. But something else I owe, and must repay at once. Be so good as to receive back a sword, sir, of which I am all unworthy to deprive you."

But as he proffered it, M. Etienne put up both hands to thrust the gift away, then covered his face with them.

"Not now, monsieur—not now! Tomorrow perhaps . . . but not now, or I may break it indeed!"

Still with his face covered, he tottered off towards the chapel.

CHAPTER XXV

THE RAPIDS

THEY had run the Galops rapids, Point Iroquois, Point Cardinal, the Rapide Plat, without disaster though not without heavy toil. The fury of the falls far exceeded Amherst's expectations, but he believed that he had seen the worst, and he blessed the pilotage of Dominique and Bateese Guyon.

Here and there the heavier batteaux carrying the guns would be warped or pushed and steadied along shore in the shallow water under the bank, by gangs, to avoid some peril over which the whaleboats rode easily ; and this not only delayed the flotilla but accounted for the loss of a few men caught at unawares by the edge of the current, swept off their legs, and drowned.

On the first day of September they ran the Long Saut and floated across the still basin of Lake St. Francis. At the foot of the lake the General landed a company or two

of riflemen to dislodge La Corne's militia ; but La Corne was already falling back upon the lower rapids, and, as it turned out, this redoubtable partisan gave no trouble at all.

They reached and passed Coteau du Lac on the 3rd.

Dominique and Bateese steered the two leading whaleboats, setting the course for the rest as they had set it all the way down from Fort Amitié. By M. Etienne's request, he and his niece and the few disabled prisoners from the fort travelled in these two boats under a small guard. It appeared that the poor gentleman's wits were shaken ; he took an innocent pride now in the skill of the two brothers, his family's *censitaires*, and throughout the long days he discoursed on it wearisomely. The siege—his brother's death—Fort Amitié itself and his two years and more of residence there—seemed to have faded from his mind. He spoke of Boisveyrac as though he had left it but a few hours since.

"And the General," said he to Diane, "will be interested in seeing the Seigniory."

"A sad sight, monsieur !" put in Bateese, overhearing him. (Just before embarking, M. Etienne, Diane and Félicité had been assigned to Bateese's boat, while Father Launoy, Father Joly and two wounded

prisoners travelled in Dominique's.) "A sight to break the heart! We passed it, Dominique and I, on our way to and from Montreal. Figure to yourself that the corn was standing already over-ripe, and it will be standing yet, though we are in September!"

"The General will make allowances," answered M. Etienne with grave simplicity. "He will understand that we have had no time for harvesting of late. Another year——"

Diane shivered. And yet—was it not better to dote thus, needing no pity, happy as a child, than to live sane and feel the torture? Better perhaps, but best and blesseddest to escape the choice as her father had escaped it! As the river bore her nearer to Boisveyrac she saw his tall figure pacing the familiar shores, pausing to con the acres that were his and had been his father's and his father's father's. She saw and understood that smile of his which had so often puzzled her as a child when she had peered up into his face under its broad-brimmed hat and noted his eyes as they rested on the fields, the clearings, the forest; noted his cheeks reddened with open-air living; his firm lips touched with pride—the pride of a king treading his undisputed ground. In those

days she and Armand had been something of an enigma to their father, and he to them; their vision tinged and clouded, perhaps, by a drop or two of dusky Indian blood. But now he had suddenly become intelligible to her, an heroic figure, wonderfully simple. She let her memory call up picture after picture of him—as he sat in the great parlour hearing “cases,” dispensing fatherly justice; as he stood up at a marriage feast to drink the bride’s and bridegroom’s health and commend their example to all the young *habitants*; as he patted the heads of the children trooping to their first communion; as he welcomed his *censitaires* on St. Martin’s day, when they poured in with their rents—wheat, eggs and poultry—the poultry all alive, heels tied, heads down, throats distended and squalling—until the barnyard became Babel, and still he went about pinching the fowls’ breasts, running the corn through his hands, dispensing a word of praise here, a prescription there, and kindness everywhere. Now bad harvests would vex him no more, nor the fate of his familiar fields. In the wreck of all he had lived for, his life had stood up clear for a moment, complete in itself and vindicated. And the moment which had revealed had also ended it; he lay now beneath the chapel pave-

ment at Fort Amitié, indifferently awaiting judgment, his sword by his side.

They ran the Cedars and, taking breath on the smooth waters below, steered for the shore where the towers and tall chimneys of Boisveyrac crept into view, and the long façade of the Seigniory, slowly unfolding itself from the forest.

Here the leading boats were brought to land while the flotilla collected itself for the next descent. A boat had capsised and drowned its crew in the Long Saut, and Amherst had learnt the lesson of that accident and thenceforward allowed no straggling. Constant to his rule, too, of leaving no post in his rear until satisfied that it was harmless, he proposed to inspect the Seigniory, and sent a message desiring M. Etienne's company—and Mademoiselle's, if to grant this favour would not distress her.

Diane prayed to be excused; but M. Etienne accepted with alacrity. He had saluted the first glimpse of the homestead with a glad cry, eager as a schoolboy returning for his holidays. He met the General on the slope with a gush of apologies. 'He must overlook the unkempt condition of the fields. . . . Boisveyrac was not wont to make so poor a show . . . the estate, in fact, though not rich, had always been well kept

up . . . the stonework was noted throughout New France, and every inch of timber (would M. le Général observe?) thoroughly well seasoned. . . . Yes, those were the arms above the entrance—Noël quartering Tilly—two of the oldest families in the province . . . If M. le Général took an interest in heraldry, these other quarterings were worth perusal . . . de Repentigny, de Contrecoeur, Traversy, St. Ours, de Valrennes, de la Mothe, d'Ailleboust . . . and the windmill would repay an ascent . . . the view from its summit was magnificent. . . .’

Diane, seated in the boat and watching, saw him halt and point out the escutcheons; saw him halt again in the gateway and spread out his arms to indicate the solidity of the walls; could almost, reading his gestures, hear the words they explained; and her cheeks burned with shame.

“A fine estate!” said a voice in the next boat.

“Yes, indeed,” answered Bateese at her elbow; “there is no Seigniory to compare with Boisveyrac. And we will live to welcome you back to it, mademoiselle. The English are no despoilers, they tell me.”

She glanced at Dominique. He had filled a pipe, and, as he smoked, his eyes followed her uncle’s gestures placidly. Scorn of him,

scorn of herself, intolerable shame, rose in a flood together.

“If my uncle behaves like a *roturier*, it is because his mind is gone. Shall *we* spy on him and laugh?—ghosts of those who are afraid to die!”

Father Launoy looked up from his breviary.

“Mademoiselle is unjust,” said he quietly. “To my knowledge, those servants of hers, whom she reproaches, have risked death and taken wounds, in part for her sake.”

Diane sat silent, gazing upon the river. Yes, she had been unjust, and she knew it. Félicité had told her how the garrison had rushed after Dominique to rescue her, and of the struggle in the stairway of the tower. Dominique bore an ugly cut, half-healed yet, reaching from his right eyebrow across the cheekbone—the gash of an Indian knife. Bateese could steer with his left hand only; his right he carried in a sling. And the two men lying at this moment by Father Launoy’s feet had taken their wounds for her sake. Unjust she had been; bitterly unjust. How could she explain the secret of her bitterness—that she despised herself?

Boats were crowding thick around them now, many of them half filled with water. The crews, while they baled, had each a

separate tale to tell of their latest adventure; each, it seemed, had escaped destruction by a hair's-breadth. The Cedars had been worse even than the Long Saut. They laughed and boasted, wringing their clothes. The nearest flung questions at Dominique, at Bateese. The Cascades, they understood, were the worst in the whole chain of rapids, always excepting the La Chine. But the La Chine were not to be attempted; the army would land above them, at Isle Perrot perhaps, or at the village near the falls, and cover the last nine or ten miles on foot. But what of the Buisson? and of the Roches Fendues?

More than an hour passed in this clamour, and still the boats continued to crowd around. The first-comers, having baled, were looking to their accoutrements, testing the powder in their flasks, repolishing the locks and barrels of their muskets. "To be sure La Corne and his militiamen had disappeared, but there was still room for a skirmish between this and Lake St. Louis; if he had posted himself on the bank below, he might prove annoying. The rapids were bad enough without the addition of being fired upon during the descent, when a man had work enough to hold tight by the gunwale and say his prayers. Was the General

sending a force down to clear La Corne out?"

"Diane!"

A crowd of soldiers had gathered on the bank, shutting out all view of the Seigniory. Diane, turning at the sound of her uncle's voice, saw the men make way, and caught her breath. He was not alone. He came through the press triumphantly, dragging by the hand an Indian—an Indian who hung back from the river's brink with eyes averted, fastened on the ground—the man whom, of all men, she most feared to meet.

"Diane, the General has been telling me—this honest fellow—we have been most remiss——"

M. Etienne panted as he picked his steps down the bank. His face was glowing.

"——He understands a little French, it seems. I have the General's permission to give him a seat in our boat. He tells me he is averse to being thanked, but that is nonsense. I insisted on his coming."

"You have thanked me once already, monsieur," urged John à Cleeve in a voice as low as he could pitch it.

"But not sufficiently. You hear, Diane?—he speaks French! I was confused at the time; I did not gather——"

She felt Dominique's eyes upon her. Was

her face so white then ? He must not guess. . . . She held out her hand, commanding her voice to speak easily, wondering the while at the sound of it.

“Welcome, my friend. My uncle is right ; we have been remiss——”

Her voice trailed off, as her eyes fell on Father Launoy. He was staring, not at her, but at the Indian ; curiously at first, then with dawning suspicion.

Involuntarily she glanced again towards Dominique. He, too, slowly moved his gaze from her face and fastened it on the Indian.

He knew. . . . Father Launoy knew. . . . Oh, when would the boats push off ?

They pushed off and fell into their stations at length, amid almost interminable shouting of orders and cross-shouting, pulling and backing of oars. She had stolen one look at Bateese. . . . He did not suspect . . . but, in the other boat, they knew.

Her uncle's voice ran on like a brook. She could not look up, for fear of meeting her lover's eyes—yes, her lover's ! She was reckless now. They knew. She would deceive herself no longer. She was base—base. He stood close, and in his presence she was glad—fiercely, deliciously, desperately. She, betrayed in all her vows, was

glad. The current ran smoothly. If only, beyond the next ledge, might lie annihilation !

The current ran with an oily smoothness. They were nearing the Roches Fendues.

Dominique's boat led.

A clear voice began to sing, high and loud, in a ringing tenor :

“ Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre :
Mironton, mironton, mirontaine. . . ”

At the first note John à Cleeve, glancing swiftly at Bateese, saw his body stiffen suddenly with his hand on the tiller ; saw his eyes travel forward, seeking his brother's ; saw his face whiten. Dominique stood erect, gazing back, challenging. Beyond him John caught a glimpse of Father Launoy looking up from his breviary ; and the priest's face, too, was white and fixed.

Voices in the boats behind began to curse loudly ; for “ Malbrouck ” was no popular air with the English. But Bateese took up the chant :

“ Malbrouck s'en va t'en guerre—
Ne sais quand reviendra ! ”

They were swinging past Bout de l'Isle. Already the keel under foot was gathering way. From Bateese, who stood with eyes stiffened now and inscrutable, John looked

down upon Diane. She lifted her face with a wan smile, but she, too, was listening to the challenge flung back from the leading boat.

“ Il reviendra-z à Pâques . . . ”

He flung one glance over his shoulder, and saw the channel dividing ahead. Dominique was leaning over, pressing down the helm to starboard. Over Dominique's arm Father Launoy stared rigidly. Father Joly, as if aware of something amiss, had cast out both hands and was grasping the gunwale. The boat, sucked into the roar of the rapids, shot down the left channel—the channel of death.

“ Il reviendra-z à Pâques,
Ou—à la Trinité ! ”

The voice was lost in the roar of the falls, now drumming loud in John's ears. He knew nothing of these rapids ; but two channels lay ahead and the choice between them. He leapt across M. Etienne, and hurling Bateese aside, seized the tiller and thrust it hard over, heading for the right.

Peering back through the spray as he bent he saw the helmsmen astern staring—hesitating. They had but a second or two in which to choose. He shouted and shouted again—in English. But the tumbling waters roared high above his shouts.

He reached out and gripping Bateese by the collar, forced the tiller into his hand. Useless now to look back and try to discover how many boats were following !

Bateese, with a sob, crept back to the tiller and steered.

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Not until the foot of the falls was reached did John know that the herd had followed him. But forty-six boats had followed Dominique's fatal lead : and of their crews ninety red-coated corpses tossed with Dominique's and the two priests' and spun in the eddies beneath the *Grand Bouillie*.

At dawn next morning the sentries in Montreal caught sight of them drifting down past the walls, and carried the news. So New France learnt that its hour was near.

CHAPTER XXVI

DICK'S JUDGMENT

TWO days later Amherst landed his troops at La Chine, marched them unopposed to Montreal, and encamped before the city on its western side. Within the walls M. de Vaudreuil called a council of war.

Resistance was madness. From east, south, west, the French commanders—Bourlamaque, Bougainville, Roquemaure, Dumas, La Corne—had all fallen back, deserted by their militias. The provincial army had melted down to two hundred men; the troops of the line numbered scarce above two thousand. The city, crowded with non-combatant refugees, held a bare fortnight's provisions. Its walls, built for defence against Indians, could not stand against the guns which Amherst was already dragging up from the river; its streets of wooden houses awaited only the first shell to set them ablaze.

On the eastern side Murray was moving

closer, to encamp for the siege. To the south the tents of Haviland's army dotted the river shore. Seventeen thousand British and British-Colonials ringed about all that remained of New France, ready to end her by stroke of sword if Vaudreuil would not by stroke of pen.

Next morning Bougainville sought Amherst's tent and presented a bulky paper containing fifty-five articles of capitulation. Amherst read them through, and came to the demand that the troops should march out with arms, cannon, flags, and all the honours of war. "Inform the Governor," he answered, "that the whole garrison of Montreal, and all other French troops in Canada, must lay down their arms, and undertake not to serve again in this war." Bougainville bore his message, and returned in a little while to remonstrate; but in vain. Then Lévis tried his hand, sending his quartermaster-general to plead against terms so humiliating—"terms," he wrote, "to which it will not be possible for us to subscribe." Amherst replied curtly that the terms were harsh, and he had made them so intentionally; they marked his sense of the conduct of the French throughout the war in exciting their Indian allies to atrocity and murder.

So Fort William Henry was avenged at

length, in the humiliation of gallant men ; and human vengeance proved itself, perhaps, neither more nor less clumsy than usual.

Vaudreuil tried to exact that the English should, on their side, pack off their Indians. He represented that the townsfolk of Montreal stood in terror of being massacred. Again Amherst refused. "No Frenchman," said he, "surrendering under treaty has ever suffered outrage from the Indians of our army." This was on the 7th of September.

Early on the 8th Vaudreuil yielded and signed the capitulation. Lévis, in the name of the army, protested bitterly. "If the Marquis de Vaudreuil, through political motives, believes himself obliged to surrender the colony at once, we beg his leave to withdraw with the troops of the line to Isle Sainte-Hélène, to maintain there, on our own behalf, the honour of the King's arms." To this, of course, the Governor could not listen. Before the hour of surrender the French regiments burnt their flags.

On the southern shore of the St. Lawrence, in the deepest recess of a small curving bay, the afternoon sun fell through a screen of bulrushes upon a birch canoe and a naked man seated in the shallows beside it. In one hand he held out, level with his head,

a lock of hair, dark and long and matted, while the other sheared at it with a razor. The razor flashed as he turned it this way and that against the sun. On his shoulders and raised upper arm a few water-drops glistened, for he had been swimming.

The severed locks fell into the stream that rippled beside him through the bulrush stems. Some found a channel at once and were swept out of sight, others were caught against the stems and trailed out upon the current like queer water-flags. He laid the razor back in the canoe and, rising cautiously, looked about for a patch of clear, untroubled water to serve him for a mirror ; but small eddies and cross-currents dimpled the surface everywhere, and his search was not a success. Next he fetched forth from the canoe an earthenware pan with lye and charcoal, mixed a paste, and began to lather his head briskly.

Twice he paused in his lathering. Before his shelter rolled the great river, almost two miles broad ; and clear across that distance, from Montreal, came the sound of drums beating, bells ringing, men shouting and cheering. In the Place d'Armes, over yonder, Amherst was parading his troops to receive the formal surrender of the Marquis de Vaudreuil. Murray and Haviland were there,

leading their brigades, with Gage and Fraser and Burton ; Carleton and Haldimand and Howe—Howe of the Heights of Abraham, brother of him who fell in the woods under Ticonderoga ; the great Johnson of the Mohawk Valley, whom the Iroquois obeyed ; Rogers of the backwoods and his brothers, bravest of the brave ; Schuyler and Lyman : and over against them, drinking the bitterest cup of their lives, Lévis and Bourlamaque and Bougainville, Dumas, Pouchot, and de la Corne—victors and vanquished, all the surviving heroes of the five years' struggle face to face in the city square.

Hi motus animorum atque hæc certamina tanta—the half of North America was changing hands at this moment, and how a bare two miles' distance diminished it all ! What child's play it made of the rattling drums ! From his shelter John à Cleeve could see almost the whole of the city's river front—all of it, indeed, but a furlong or two at its western end ; and the clean atmosphere showed up even the loopholes pierced in the outer walls of the great Seminary. Above the old-fashioned square bastions of the citadel a white flag floated ; and that this flag bore a red cross instead of the golden lilies it had borne yesterday was the one and only sign, not easily discerned, of a reversal

in the fates of two nations. The steeples and turrets of Montreal, the old windmill, the belfry and high-pitched roof of Notre Dame de Bonsecours, the massed buildings of the Seminary and the Hôtel Dieu, the spire of the Jesuits, rose against the green shaggy slopes of the mountain, and over the mountain the sky paled tranquilly toward evening. Sky, mountain, forests, mirrored belfry and broad rolling river—a permanent peace seemed to rest on them all.

Half a mile down-stream, where Haviland's camp began, the men of the nearest picket were playing chuck-farthing. Duty deprived them of the spectacle in the Place d'Armes, and thus, as soldiers, they solaced themselves. Through the bulrush stems John heard their voices and laughter.

A canoe came drifting down the river, across the opening of the little creek. A man sat in it with his paddle laid across his knees; and as the stream bore him past, his eyes scanned the water inshore. John recognised Bateese at once; but Bateese, after a glance, went by unheeding. It was no living man he sought.

John finished his lathering at leisure, waded out beyond the rushes and cast himself forward into deep water. He swam a few strokes, ducked his head, dived, and

swam on again ; turned on his back and floated, staring up into the sky ; breasted the strong current and swam against it, fighting it in sheer lightness of heart. Boyhood came back to him with his cleansing, and a boyish memory—of an hour between sunset and moonrise ; of a Devonshire lane, where the harvest waggons had left wisps of hay dangling from the honeysuckles ; of a triangular patch of turf at the end of the lane, and a whitewashed Meeting-House with windows open, and through the windows a hymn pouring forth upon the Sabbath twilight—

“ Time, like an ever-rolling stream,
Bears all his sons away”

An ever-rolling stream ! It would bear him down, and the generals yonder, victors and vanquished, drums and trumpets, hopes and triumphs and despair—overwhelming, making equal the greater with the less. But meanwhile, how good to be alive and a man, to swim and breast it ! So this river, if he fought it, would out-tire him, sweep him away and roll on unheeding, majestic, careless of life and of time. But for this moment he commanded it. Let his new life bring what it might, this hour the river should be his servant, should prepare and wash him clean, body and soul. He lifted his head,

shaking the water from his eyes, and the very volume of the lustral flood contented him. He felt the strong current pressing against his arms, and longed to embrace it all. And again, tickled by the absurdity of his fancies, he lay on his back and laughed up at the sky.

He swam to shore, flung himself down, and panted. Across the river, by the landing-stage beneath the citadel, a band was playing down Haviland's brigade to its boats; and one of the boats was bringing a man whom John had great need to meet. When the sun had dried and warmed him, he dressed at leisure, putting on a suit complete, with striped shirt, socks, and cowhide boots purchased from a waterside trader across the river and paid for with the last of his moneys earned in the wilderness. The boots, though a world too wide, cramped him painfully; and he walked up and down the bank for a minute or two, to get accustomed to them, before strolling down to meet the challenge of the pickets.

They were men of the 17th, and John inquired for their adjutant. They pointed to the returning boats. The corporal in charge of the picket, taking note of his clothes, asked if he belonged to Loring's batteau-men, and John answered that he

had come down with them through the falls.

"A nice mess you made of it up yonder," was the corporal's comment. "Two days we were on fatigue duty picking up the bodies you sent down to us, and burying them. Only just now a fellow came along in a canoe—a half-witted kind of Canadian. Said he was searching for his brother."

"Yes," said John, "I saw him go by. I know the man."

"Hell of a lot of brother he's likely to find. We've tidied up the whole length of the camp front. But there's corpses yet, a mile or two below, they say. I sent him down to take his pick."

He put a question or two about the catastrophe. "Scandalous sort of bungle," he pronounced it, being alike ignorant of the strength of the rapids, and fain, as an honest soldier of Haviland's army, to take a discrediting view of anything done by Amherst's. He waxed very scornful indeed.

"Now *we* was allowing you didn't find the stream fast enough, by the way you kept us cooling our heels here." Perceiving that John was indisposed to quarrel, he went wearily back to his chuck-farthing.

John sat down and waited, scanning the boats as they drew to shore. Dick, whom

he had left an ensign, was now adjutant of the 17th. This meant, of course, that he had done creditably and made himself felt. It meant certain promotion, too; Dick being the very man, as adjutant, to lick a regiment into shape. John could not help pondering a little, by contrast, on his own career, but without any tinge of jealousy or envy. Dick owed nothing to luck; would honestly earn or justify any favour that Fortune might grant.

The young adjutant, stepping ashore, swung round on his heel to call an order to the crowding boats. His voice, albeit John thrilled to the sound of it, was not the voice he remembered. It had hardened somehow. And his face, when John caught sight of it in profile, was not the face of a man on the sunny side of favour. It was manlier, more resolute perhaps than of old, but it had put on reserve and showed even some discontent in the set of the chin—a handsome face yet, and youthful, and full of eager strength; but with a shadow on it (thought John) that it had not worn in the days when Dick Montgomery took his young ease in Sion and criticised men and generals.

He was handling the disembarkation well. Clearly, too, his men respected and liked him. But (thought John again) who could

help loving him? John had not bargained for the rush of tenderness that shook him as he stood there unperceived, and left him trembling. For a moment he longed only to escape; and then, mastered by an impulse, scarce knowing what he did, stepped forward and touched his cousin's arm.

"Dick!" he said softly.

Montgomery turned, cast a sharp glance at him, and fell back staring.

"*You!*" John saw the lips form the word, but no sound came. He himself was watching Dick's eyes.

Yes, as incredulity passed, joy kindled in them, and the old affection. For once in his life Richard Montgomery fairly broke down.

"Jack!"—he stretched out both hands. "We heard—— You were not among the prisoners——" His voice stammered to a halt: his eyes brimmed.

"Come, and hear all about it. Oh, Dick, Dick, 'tis good to see your face again!"

They linked arms, and Dick suffered John to lead him back to the canoe among the rushes.

"My mother . . .?" asked John, halting there by the brink.

"You haven't heard?" Dick turned his face and stared away across the river.

"I have heard nothing. . . . Is she dead?"

Dick bent his head gravely. "A year since. . . . Your brother Philip wrote the news to me. It was sudden: just a failure of the heart, he said. She had known of the danger for years, but concealed it."

John seated himself on the bank, and gazed out over the river for a minute or so in silence. "She believed me dead, of course?" he began, but did not ask how the blow had affected her. Likely enough Dick would not know. "Is there any more bad news?" he asked at length.

"None. Your brother is well, and there's another child born. The à Cleeves are not coming to an end just yet. No more questions, Jack, until you've told me all about yourself!"

He settled down to listen, and John, propping himself on an elbow, began his tale.

Twice or thrice during the narrative Dick furrowed his brows in perplexity. When, however, John came to tell of his second year's sojourn with the Ojibways, he sat up with a jerk and stared at his cousin in a blank dismay.

"But, good Lord! You said just now that this fellow — this Menehwehna — had promised to help you back to the army, as

soon as Spring came. Did he break his word, then?"

"No : he would have kept his word. But I didn't want to return."

"You didn't—want—to return!" Dick repeated the words slowly, trying to grasp them. "Man alive, were you clean mad? Don't you see what cards you held? Oh," he groaned, "you're not going on to tell me that you threw them away—the chance of a lifetime!"

"I don't see," answered John simply.

Dick sprang up and paced the bank with his hands clenched, half lifted. "God! if such a chance had fallen to *me*!" You had intercepted two despatches, one of which might have hurried the French up from Montreal here to save Fort Frontenac. Wherever you could, you bungled; but you rode on the full tide of luck. And even when you tumbled in love with this girl—oh, you needn't deny it!—even when you walked straight into the pitfall that ninety-nine men in a hundred would have seen and avoided—your very folly pulled you out of the mess! You escaped, by her grace, having foiled two despatches and possessed yourself of knowledge that might have saved Amherst from wasting ten minutes where he wasted two days. And now you stare at me when

I tell you that you held the chance of a lifetime! Why, man, you could have asked what promotion you willed! Some men have luck——!" Speech failed him and he cast himself down at full length on the turf again. "Go on," he commanded grimly.

And John resumed, but in another, colder tone. The rest of the story he told perfunctorily, omitting all mention of the fight on the flagstaff tower and telling no more than was needful of the last adventure of the rapids. Either he or Dick had changed. Having begun, he persevered, but now without hope to make himself understood.

"Did ever man have such luck?" grumbled Dick. "You have made yourself a deserter. You did all you could to earn being shot; you walked back, and again did all you could to leave Amherst no other choice but to shoot you. And, again, you blunder into saving half an army! Have you seen Amherst?"

"He sent for me at La Chine, to reward me."

"You told him all, of course?"

"I did—or almost all!"

"Then, since he has not shot you, I presume you are now restored to the Forty-sixth, and become the just pride of the regiment?"

Dick's voice had become bitter with a bitterness at which John wondered ; but all his answer was :

"Look at these clothes. They will tell you if I am restored to the Forty-sixth."

"So that was more than Amherst could bring himself to stomach?"

"On the contrary, he gave me my choice. But I am resigning my commission."

"Eh? Well, I suppose your monstrous luck with the despatches had earned you his leniency. You told him of Fort Frontenac, I presume?"

"I did not tell him of that. But some one else had taken care that he should learn something of it."

"The girl? You don't mean to tell me that your luck stepped in once again?"

"Mademoiselle Diane must have guessed that I meant to tell the General all. She left a sealed letter which he opened in my presence. As for my luck," continued John—and now it was his turn to speak bitterly—"you may think how I value it when I tell you how the letter ended. With the General's help, it said, she was hiding herself for ever ; and as a man of honour I must neither seek her nor hope for sight of her again."

And Dick's comment finally proved to John that between them these two years had

fixed a gulf impassable. "Well, and you ought to respect her wishes," he said. "She interfered to save you, if ever a woman saved a man." He was striding to and fro again on the bank. "And what will you do now?" he demanded, halting suddenly.

"The General thinks Murray will be the new Governor, and promises to recommend me to him. There's work to be done in reducing the outlying French forts and bringing the Indians to reason. Probably I shall be sent west."

"You mean to live your life out in Canada?"

"I do."

"Tell me at least that you have given up hope of this girl."

John flushed. "I shall never seek her," he answered. "But while life lasts I shall not give up hope of seeing her once again."

"And I am waiting for my captaincy," said Dick grimly; "who with less than half your luck would have commanded a regiment!"

He swung about suddenly to confront a corporal—John's critical friend of the picket—who had come up the bank seeking him.

"Beg pardon, sir," said the corporal, saluting, "but there's a Canadian below that

has found a corpse along-shore, and wants to bury him on his own account."

"That will be Bateese Guyon," said John. They walked together down the shore to the spot where Bateese bent over his brother.

"This is the man," said he, "who led us through the Roches Fendues. Respect his dead body, Dick."

"I hope," said Dick, half-lifting his hat as he stood by the corpse, "I can respect a man who did a brave deed and died for his country."

CHAPTER XXVII

PRÈS-DE-VILLE

FIFTEEN years have gone by, and a few months. In December 1775, on the rock of Quebec, Great Britain clung with a last desperate grip upon Canada, which on that September day in 1760 had passed so completely into her hands.

All through December the snow had fallen almost incessantly; and almost incessantly, through the short hours of daylight, the American riflemen, from their lodgings in the suburbs close under the walls, had kept up a fire on the British defenders of Quebec. For the assailants of Great Britain now were her own children; and the man who led them was a British subject still, and but three years ago had been a British officer.

Men see their duty by different lights, but Richard Montgomery had always seen his clearly. He had left the British Army for sufficient cause; had sought America, and married an American wife. He served the

cause of political freedom now, and meant to serve it so as to win an imperishable name. The man whom King George had left for ten years a captain had been promoted by Congress Brigadier-General at a stroke. It recognised the greatness of which his own soul had always assured him. "Come what will," he had promised his young wife at parting, "you shall never be ashamed of me." His men adored him for his enthusiasm, his high and almost boyish courage, his dash, his bright self-confidence.

And his campaign had been a triumph. Ticonderoga and Crown Point had fallen before him. He had swept down the Richelieu, capturing St. John's, Chambly, Sorel. Montreal had capitulated without a blow. And so success had swept him on to the cliffs of Quebec—there to dash itself and fail as a spent wave.

He would not acknowledge this; not though small-pox had broken out among his troops and they, remembering that their term of service was all but expired, began to talk of home; not though his guns, mounted on frozen mounds, had utterly failed to batter a way into the city. As a subaltern he had idolised Wolfe, and here on the ground of Wolfe's triumphant stroke he still dreamed of rivalling it. In Quebec a cautious phleg-

matic British General sat and waited, keeping, as the moonless nights drew on, his officers ready against surprise. For a week they had slept in their clothes and with their arms beside them.

From the lower town of Quebec a road, altered now beyond recognition, ran along the base of Cape Diamond between the cliff and the river. As it climbed it narrowed to a mere defile, known as Près-de-Ville, having the scarped rock on one hand and on the other a precipice dropping almost to the water's edge. Across this defile the British had drawn a palisade and built, on the edge of the pass above, a small three-pounder battery, with a *hangar* in its rear to shelter the defenders.

Soon after midnight on the last morning of the year, a man came battling his way down from the upper town to the Près-de-Ville barrier. A blinding snowstorm raged through the darkness, and although it blew out of the north the cliff caught its eddies and beat them back swirling about the useless lantern he carried. The freshly fallen snow encumbering his legs held him steady against the buffets of the wind ; and foot by foot, feeling his way—for he could only guess how near lay the edge of the precipice

—he struggled toward the stream of light issuing from the *hangar*.

As he reached it the squall cleared suddenly. He threw back his snow-caked hood and gazed up at the citadel on the cliff. The walls aloft there stood out brilliant against the black heavens, and he muttered approvingly ; for it was he who, as Officer of the Works, had suggested to the Governor the plan of hanging out lanterns and fire-pots from the salient angles of the bastions ; and he flattered himself that, if the enemy intended an assault up yonder, not a dog could cross the great ditch undetected.

But it appeared to him that the men in the *hangar* were not watching too alertly, or they would never have allowed him to draw so near unchallenged.

He was lifting a hand to hammer on the rough door giving entrance from the rear, when it was flung open and a man in provincial uniform peered out upon the night.

“Is that you, Captain Chabot?” asked the visitor.

The man in the doorway smothered an exclamation. “The wind was driving the snow in upon us by the shovelful,” he explained. “We are keeping a sharp enough look-out down the road.”

“So I perceived,” answered John à Cleeve

curtly, and stepped past him into the *hangar*. About fifty men stood packed there in a steam of breath around the guns—the most of them Canadians and British militiamen, with a sprinkling of petticoated sailors.

“Who is working these?” asked John à Cleeve, laying his hand on the nearest three-pounder.

“Captain Barnsfare.” A red-faced seaman stepped forward and saluted awkwardly: Adam Barnsfare, master of the *Tell* transport.

“Your crew all right, captain?”

“All right, sir.”

“The Governor sends me down with word that he believes the enemy means business to-night. Where’s your artilleryman?”

“Sergeant McQuarters, sir? He stepped down, a moment since, to the barrier, to keep the sentry awake.”

John à Cleeve glanced up at the lamp smoking under the beam.

“You have too much light here,” he said.

“If McQuarters has the guns well pointed, you need only one lantern for your lint-stocks.”

He blew out the candle in his own, and reaching up a hand, lowered the light until it was all but extinct. As he did so his hood fell back and the lamp-rays illumined his up-

turned face for two or three seconds ; a tired face, pinched just now with hard living and wakefulness, but moulded and firmed by discipline. Fifteen years had bitten their lines deeply about the under-jaw and streaked the temples with grey. But they had been years of service ; and, whatever he had missed in them, he had found self-reliance.

He stepped out upon the pent of the *hangar*, and, with another glance up at the night, plunged into the deep snow, and trudged his way down to the barricade.

“Sergeant McQuarters !”

“Here, sir !” The Highlander saluted in the darkness, “Any word from up yonder, sir ?” A faint glow touched the outline of his face as he lifted it toward the illuminated citadel.

“The Governor looks for an assault to-night. So you know me, McQuarters ?”

“By your voice, sir,” answered McQuarters, and added quaintly, “Ah, but it was different weather in those days !”

“Ay,” said John, “we have come around by strange roads ; you an artilleryman, and I——” He broke off, musing. For a moment, standing there knee-deep in snow, he heard the song of the waters, saw the forests again, the dripping ledges, the cool, pendant boughs, and smelt the fragrance of

the young spruces. The spell of the woodland silence held him, and he listened again for the rustle of wild life in the undergrowth.

“Hist! What was that?”

“Another squall coming, sir. It’s on us too, and a rasper!”

But, as the snow-charged gust swept down and blinded them in its whirl, John leaned towards McQuarters and lifted his voice sharply.

“It was more than that—Hark you!” He gripped McQuarters’ arm and pointed to the barricade, over which for an instant a point of steel had glimmered. “Back, man!—back to the guns!” he yelled to the sentry. But the man was already running; and together the three floundered back to the *hangar*. Behind them blows were already sounding above the howl of the wind; blows of musket-butts hammering on the wooden palisade.

“Steady, men,” grunted McQuarters as he reached the pent. “Give them time to break an opening—their files will be nicely huddled by this.”

John à Cleeve glanced around and was satisfied. Captain Chabot had his men lined up and ready: two ranks of them, the front rank kneeling.

"Give the word, my lad," said Captain Barnsfare cheerfully, lintstock in hand.

"Fire then!—and God defend Quebec!"

The last words were lost in an explosion which seemed to lift the roof off the *hangar*. In the flare of it John saw the faces of the enemy—their arms outstretched and snatching at the palisade. Down upon them the grape-shot whistled, tearing through the gale it outstripped, and close on it followed the Canadians' volleys.

Barnsfare had sprung to the second gun. McQuarters nodded to him. . . .

For ten minutes the guns swept the pass. The flame of them lit up no faces now by the shivered palisade, and between the explosions came no cheering from down the road. The riflemen loaded, fired, and reloaded; but they aimed into darkness and silence.

Captain Chabot lifted a hand.

The squall had swept by. High in the citadel, drums were beating; and below, down by the waterside to the eastward, volleys of musketry crackled sharply. But no sound came up the pass of *Près-de-Ville*.

"That will be at the Sault-au-Matelot barrier," said McQuarters, nodding his head in the direction of the musketry.

“We’ve raked decks here, anyhow,” Captain Barnsfare commented, peering down the road; and one or two Canadians volunteered to descend and explore the palisade. For a while Captain Chabot demurred, fearing that the Americans might have withdrawn around the angle of the cliff and be holding themselves in ambush there.

“A couple of us could make sure of that,” urged John. “They have left their wounded, at all events, as you may hear by the groans. With your leave, Captain——”

Captain Chabot yielded the point, and John with a corporal and a drummer descended the pass.

A dozen bodies lay heaped by the palisade. For the moment he could not stay to attend to them, but, passing through, followed the road down to the end of its curve around the cliff. Two corpses lay here of men who, mortally wounded, had run with the crowd before dropping to rise no more. The tracks in the snow told plainly enough that the retreat had been a stampede.

Returning to the palisade he shouted up that the coast was clear, and fell to work searching the faces of the fallen. The fresh snow, in which they lay deep, had already frozen about them; and his eye, as he swung the lantern slowly round, fell on a hand and

arm which stood up stiffly above the white surface.

He stepped forward, flashing his lantern on the dead man's face—and dropped on his knees beside it.

“Do you know him, sir?” McQuarters' voice was speaking, close by.

“I know him,” answered John dully, and groped and found a thin blade which lay beside the corpse. “He was my cousin, and once my best friend.”

He felt the edge of the sword with his gloved hand, all the while staring at the arm pointing upwards and fixed in the rigor of death, frozen in its last gesture as Richard Montgomery had lifted it to wave forward his men. And as if the last thirty or forty minutes had never been, he found himself saying to McQuarters :

“We have come around by strange roads, sergeant, and some of us have parted with much on the way.”

He looked up ; but his gaze, travelling past McQuarters who stooped over the corpse, fell on the figure of a woman who had approached and halted at three paces' distance ; a hooded figure in the dress of the Hospitalières.

Something in her attitude told him that she had heard. He arose, holding the lan-

tern high ; and stared, shaking, into a face which no uncomely linen swathings could disguise from him—into eyes which death only would teach him to forget.

The fatigue-party lifted the corpse. So Richard Montgomery entered Quebec as he had promised—a General of Brigade.

The drums had ceased to call the alarm from the Citadel ; musketry no longer crackled in the riverside quarter of Sault-au-Matelot. The assault had been beaten off, and close on four hundred prisoners were being marched up the hill, followed by crowds of excited Quebecers. But John à Cleeve roamed the streets at random, alone, unconscious that all the while he gripped the hilt of his cousin's naked sword.

He was due to carry his report to the Governor. By-and-by he remembered this, and ploughed his way up the snowy incline to the Citadel. The sentry told him that the Governor was at the Seminary ; had gone down half an hour ago, to number and take the names of the prisoners. John turned back.

Some two hundred prisoners were drawn up in the great hall of the Seminary, and from the doorway John spied the Governor at the far end, interrogating them.

“Eh ?” Carleton turned, caught sight of

him and smiled gaily. "I fancy, Mr. à Cleeve, your post is going to be a sinecure after to-night's work. Chabot reports that you were at Près-de-Ville and discovered General Montgomery's body."

He turned at the sound of a murmur among the prisoners behind him. One or two had turned to the wall and were weeping audibly. Others stared at John and one or two pointed.

John, following their eyes, looked down at the sword in his hand and stammered an apology.

"Excuse me—I did not know that I carried it. . . . Sirs, believe me, I intended no offence! Richard Montgomery was my cousin."

From the Seminary he walked back to his quarters, meaning to snatch a few hours' sleep before daybreak. But having lit his candle, he found that he could not undress. The narrow room stifled him. He flung the sword on his bed, and went down to the streets again.

Dawn found him pacing the narrow sidewalk opposite a small log house in St. Louis Street. Lights shone from the upper storey. In the room to the right they had laid Montgomery's body, and were arraying it for burial.

The house door opened, and a lamp in the passage behind it cast a broadening ray across the snow. A woman stepped out, and, in the act of closing the door, caught sight of him. He made no doubt that she would pass up the street ; but, after seeming to hesitate, she came slowly over and stood before him.

“You knew me, then ?” she asked.

He bent his head humbly.

“I have seen you many times, and heard of you,” she continued. “I heard what you said, down yonder. . . . Has life been so bitter for you ?”

“Diane !”

He turned towards the house. “He has a noble face,” she said, gazing up at the bright window.

“He was a great man.”

“And yet he fought in the end against his country.”

“He believed that he did right.”

“Should *you* have believed it right ?”

John was silent.

“John !”

He gave a start at the sound of his name and she smiled faintly.

“I have learnt to say it in English, you see.”

“Do not mock me, mademoiselle ! Fifteen years——”

“That is just what I was going to say. Fifteen years is a very long time—and—and it has not been easy for me, John. I do not think I can do without you any longer.”

So in the street, under the dawn, they kissed for the first time.

EPILOGUE

I

HUDSON RIVER

“ Il reviendra-z à Pâques,
Ou—à la Trinité ! ”

ON a summer's afternoon of the year 1818, in the deep verandah of a house terraced high above the Hudson, a small company stood expectant. Schuylers and Livingstones were there, with others of the great patroon families ; one or two in complete black, and all wearing some badge of mourning. Some were young, others well advanced in middle life ; but amidst them, and a little apart, reclined a lady to whose story the oldest had listened in his childhood.

She lay back in an invalid chair, with her face set toward the noble river sweeping into view around the base of a wooded bluff, and toward the line of its course beyond, where its hidden waters furrowed the forests to the northward and divided hill from hill. Yet to

her eyes the landscape was but a blur, and she saw it only in memory.

For forty-three years she had worn black and a widow's goffered cap. The hair beneath it was thin now, and her body frail and very far on its decline to the grave. On the table at her elbow lay a letter beside a small field-glass, towards which, once and again, she stretched out a hand.

"It is heavy for you, aunt," said her favourite grandniece, who stood at the back of her chair—a beautiful girl in a white frock, high-waisted and tied with a broad, black sash. "We will tell you when they come in sight."

"I know, my dear ; I know. It was only to make sure."

"But you tried yesterday, and with the glass your sight was as good as mine, almost."

"Even so short a while makes a difference, now. You cannot understand that, Janet ; you will, some day."

"We will tell you," the girl repeated, "as soon as ever they come in sight ; perhaps before. We may see the smoke first between the trees, you know."

"Ay," the old lady answered, and added, "There was no such thing in those days." Her hand went out toward the field-glass again, and rested, trembling a little, on the

edge of the table. "I thought—yesterday—that the trees had grown a good deal. They have closed in, and the river is narrower ; or perhaps it looks narrower, through a glass."

The men at the far end of the verandah, who had been talking apart while they scanned the upper bends of the river, lowered their voices suddenly. They had heard a throbbing sound to the northward ; either the beat of a drum or the panting stroke of a steamboat's paddles.

All waited, with their eyes on the distant woods. By-and-by a film of dark smoke floated up as through a crevice in the massed tree-tops, lengthened, and spread itself in the sunlight. The throbbing grew louder—the beat of a drum, slow and funereal, with the clank of paddle-wheels filling its pauses. And now—hark!—a band playing the Dead March !

The girl knelt and lifted the glass, ready focussed. The failing woman leaned forward, and with fingers that trembled on the tube, directed it where the river swept broadly around the headland.

What did she see ? At first an ugly steamboat nosing into view and belching smoke from its long funnel ; then a double line of soldiers crowding the deck, and between their lines what seemed at first to be a black

mound with a scarlet bar across it. But the mound was the plumed hearse of her husband, and the scarlet bar the striped flag of the country for which he had died—his adopted country, long since invited to her seat among the nations.

The men in the verandah had bared their heads. They heard a bell ring on board the steamboat. Her paddles ceased to rotate, and after a moment began to churn the river with reversed motion, holding the boat against its current. The troops on her deck, standing with reversed arms; the muffled drums; the half-masted flag; all saluted a hero and the widow of a hero.

So, after forty-three years, Richard Montgomery returned to the wife he had left with a promise that, come what might, she should be proud of him.

Proud she was; she, a worn old woman sitting in the shadow of death, proud of a dry skeleton and a handful of dust under a crape pall. And they had parted in the heyday of youth, young and ardent, with arms passionately loth to untwine.

What did her eyes seek beneath the pall, the plumes, the flag? Be sure she saw him laid there at his manly length, inert, with cheeks only a little paler than they had been as he stood looking down into her eyes a

moment before he strode away. In truth, the searchers, opening his grave in Quebec, had found a few bones, and a skull from which, as they lifted it, a musket-ball dropped back into the rotted coffin ; these, and a lock of hair, tied with a leathern thong.

They did not bring him ashore to her. Even after forty years his return must be for a moment only ; his country still claimed him. The letter beside her was from Governor Clinton, written in courtliest words, telling her of the grave in New York prepared for him beneath the cenotaph set up by Congress many years before.

Again a bell rang sharply, the paddles ceased backing and ploughed forward again. To the sound of muffled drums he passed down the river, and out of her sight for ever.

II

THE PHANTOM GUARD

JUST a hundred years have passed since the assault on Près-de-Ville. It is the last day of 1875, and in the Citadel above the cliff the Commandant and his lady are holding a ball. Outside the warm rooms winter binds Quebec. The St. Lawrence is frozen over, and the copings and escarpments of the old fortress sparkle white under a flying moon.

The Commandant's lady had decreed fancy dress for her dancers, and further, that their costumes shall be those of 1775. The Commandant himself wears the antique uniform of the Royal Artillery, and some of his guests salute him in the very coats, and carry the very swords, their ancestors wore this night a hundred years ago. They pass up the grand staircase hung with standards—golden leopards of England, golden irises of France, the Dominion ensign, the Stars and Stripes—and come face to face with a

trophy, on the design of which Captain Larne of the B Battery has spent some pious hours. Here, above stacks of muskets piled over drums and trumpets, is draped the red and black "rebel" pennant so that its folds fall over the escutcheon of the United States; and against this hangs a sword, heavily craped, with the letters R.I.P. beneath it.

It is the same thin blade of steel which dropped on the snow, its hilt warm from Richard Montgomery's hand, as he turned to wave forward his men. His enemies salute it to-night.

They pass into the upper ballroom. They are met to dance a new year in, and the garrison band is playing a waltz of Strauss's—"Die guten alten Zeiten." So dance follows dance, and the hours fly by to midnight—outside, the moon in chase past the clouds and over fields and wastes of snow—inside, the feet of dancers warming to their work under the clustered lights.

But on the stroke of midnight a waltz ceases suddenly. From the lower ballroom the high, clear note of a trumpet rings out, silencing the music of the bandsmen. A panel has flown open there and a trumpeter steps forth blowing a call which, as it dies away, is answered by a skirl of pipes and

tapping of drums from a remote corner of the barracks. The guests fall back as the sound swells on the night, drawing nearer. Pipes are shrieking now ; the rattle of drums shakes the windows. Two folding doors fall wide, and through them stalks a ghostly guard headed by the ghost of Sergeant Hugh McQuarters, in kilt and tartan and cross-belt yet spotted with the blood of a brave Highlander who died in 1775, defending Quebec. The guard looks neither to right nor to left ; it passes on through hall and passage and ballroom, halts beneath Montgomery's sword, salutes it in silence, and vanishes.

Some of the ladies are the least bit scared. But the men are pronouncing it a brilliant *coup de théâtre*, and presently crowd about the trophy, discussing Montgomery and what manner of man he was.

Down in St. Louis Street the windows have been illuminated in the old house in which his body lay. Up in the Citadel the boom of guns salutes his memory.

So the world commemorates its heroes, the brave hearts and high minds that never doubted but pressed straight to their happy or unhappy goals. But some of us hear the guns saluting those who doubted and were

lost, or seemed to achieve little ; whose high hopes perished by the way ; whom fate bound or frustrated ; whom conscience or divided counsel drove athwart into paths belying their promise ; whom, wrapping both in one rest, earth covers at length indifferently with its heroes.

So let these guns, a hundred years late, salute the meeting of two lovers who, before they met and were reconciled, suffered much. The flying moon crosses the fields over which they passed forth together, and a hundred winters have smoothed their tracks on the snow. There is a tradition that they sought Boisveyrac ; that children were born to them there ; and that they lived and died as ordinary people do. But a thriving town hides the site of the Seigniory, and their graves are not to be found.

And north of Lake Michigan there long lingered another tradition—but it has died now—of an Englishman and his wife who came at rare intervals and would live among the Ojibways for a while, accepted by them and accepting their customs ; that none could predict the time of their coming or of their departure ; but that the man had, in his time, been a famous killer of bears.

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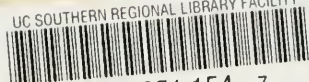
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